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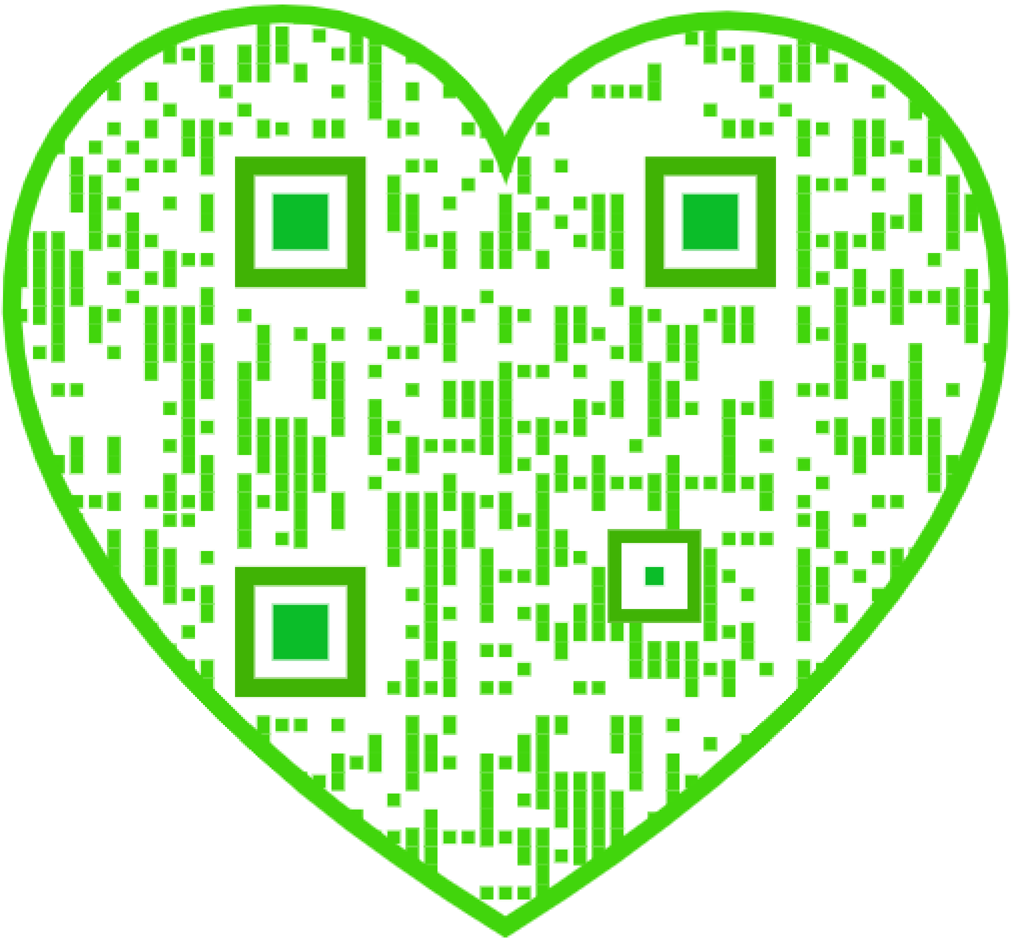

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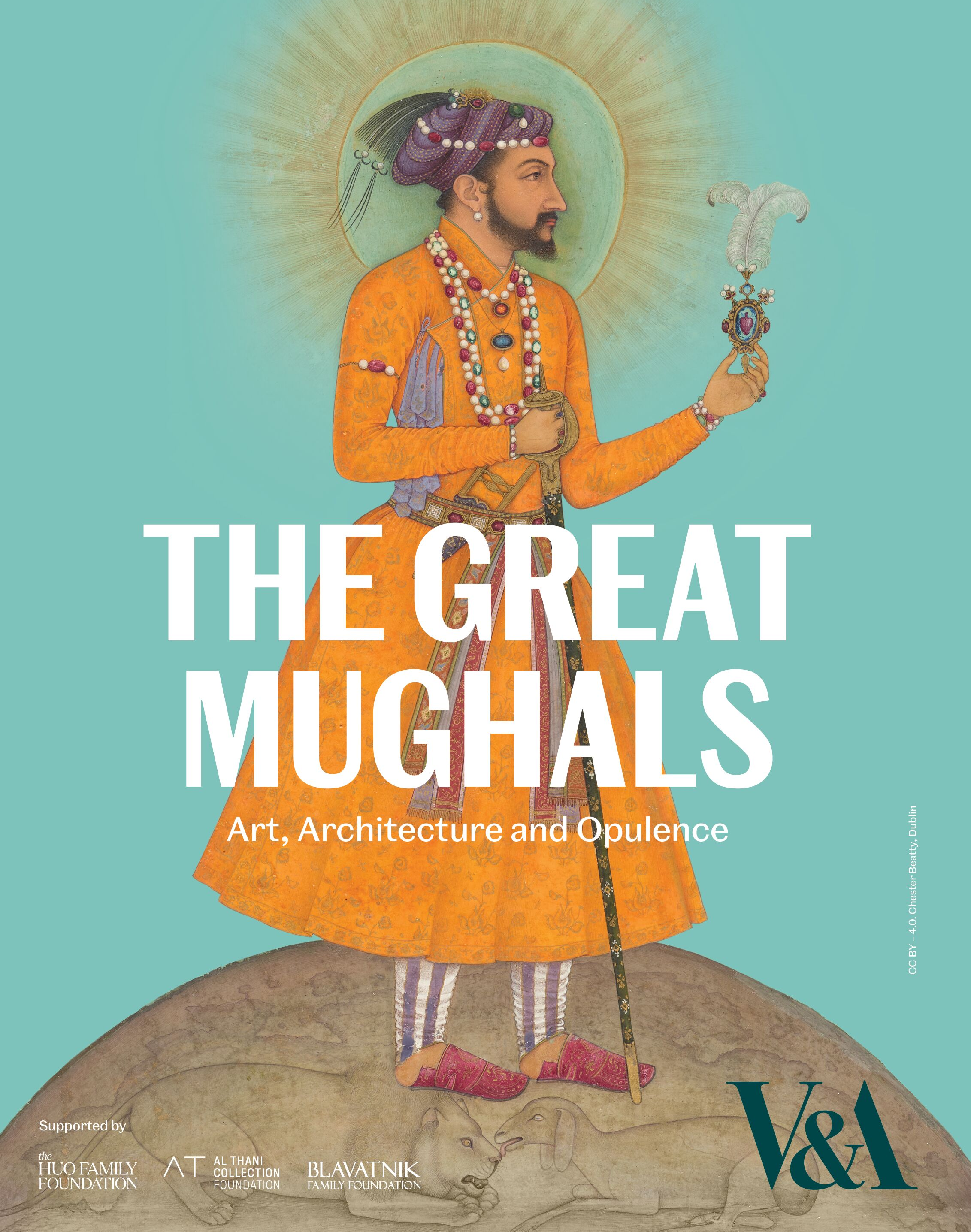

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BRITISH MUSLIM MAGAZINE

As we welcome the blessed month of Ramadan, Issue 40 of *British Muslim Magazine* is a celebration of faith, culture, and inspiration. This edition brings together captivating travel stories, meaningful reflections, and exclusive interviews that highlight the beauty of the season.

We are especially proud to collaborate with renowned creative director **Kaniz Ali**, whose visionary touch has brought fresh depth to our storytelling. Her passion for artistry and representation shines through, enhancing the essence of this special Ramadan issue.

From exploring historic Islamic sites to discovering halal-friendly luxury destinations, our pages are filled with moments of discovery and connection. As always, we remain committed to bringing you the best in Muslim lifestyle, heritage, and travel.

We hope this issue uplifts and inspires you. Ramadan Mubarak!

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British Muslim Magazine provides inspiration and advice for Muslims in Britain looking for unforgettable and luxurious travel experiences, Muslim history and heritage to food, fashion and style.

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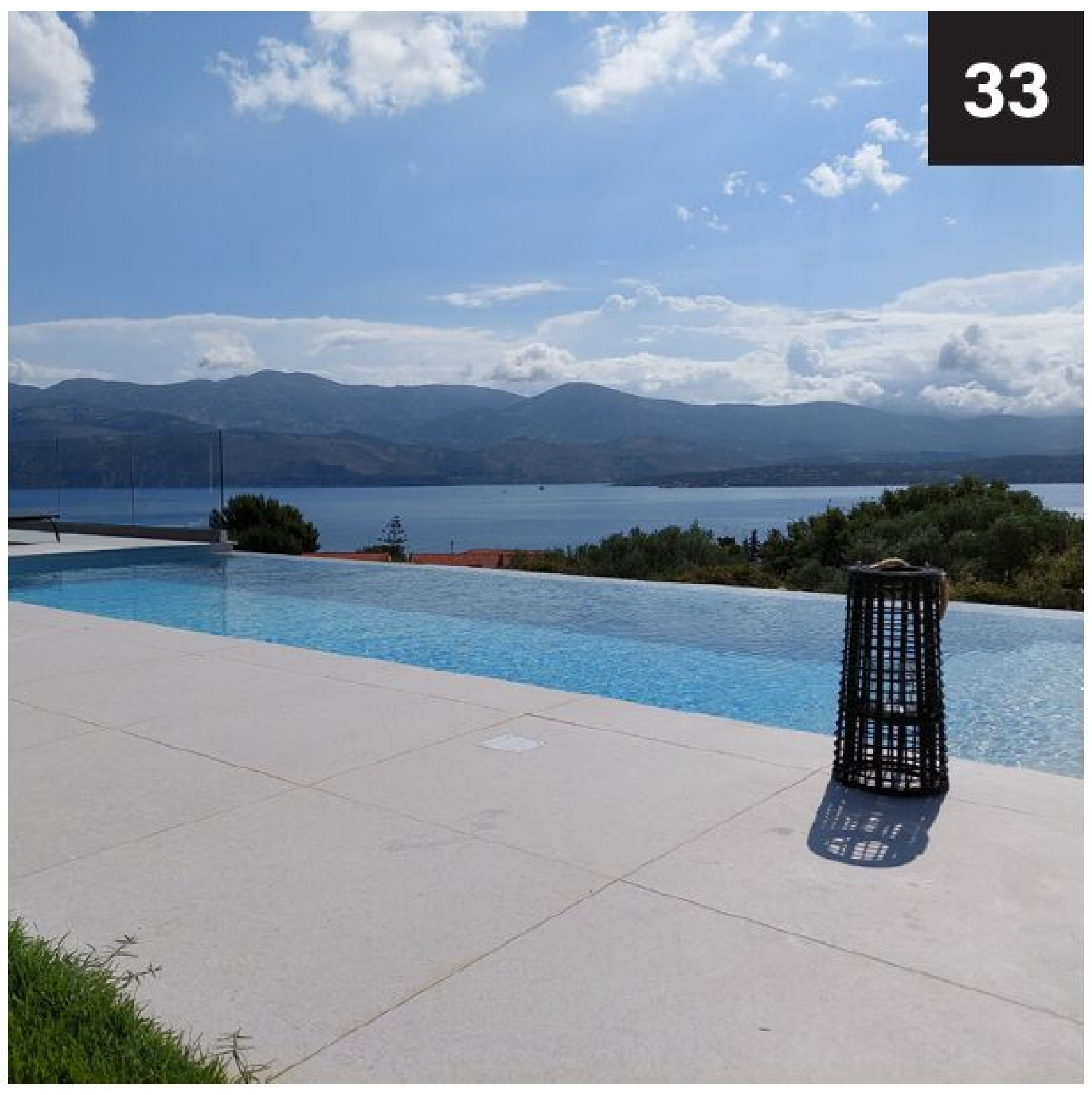

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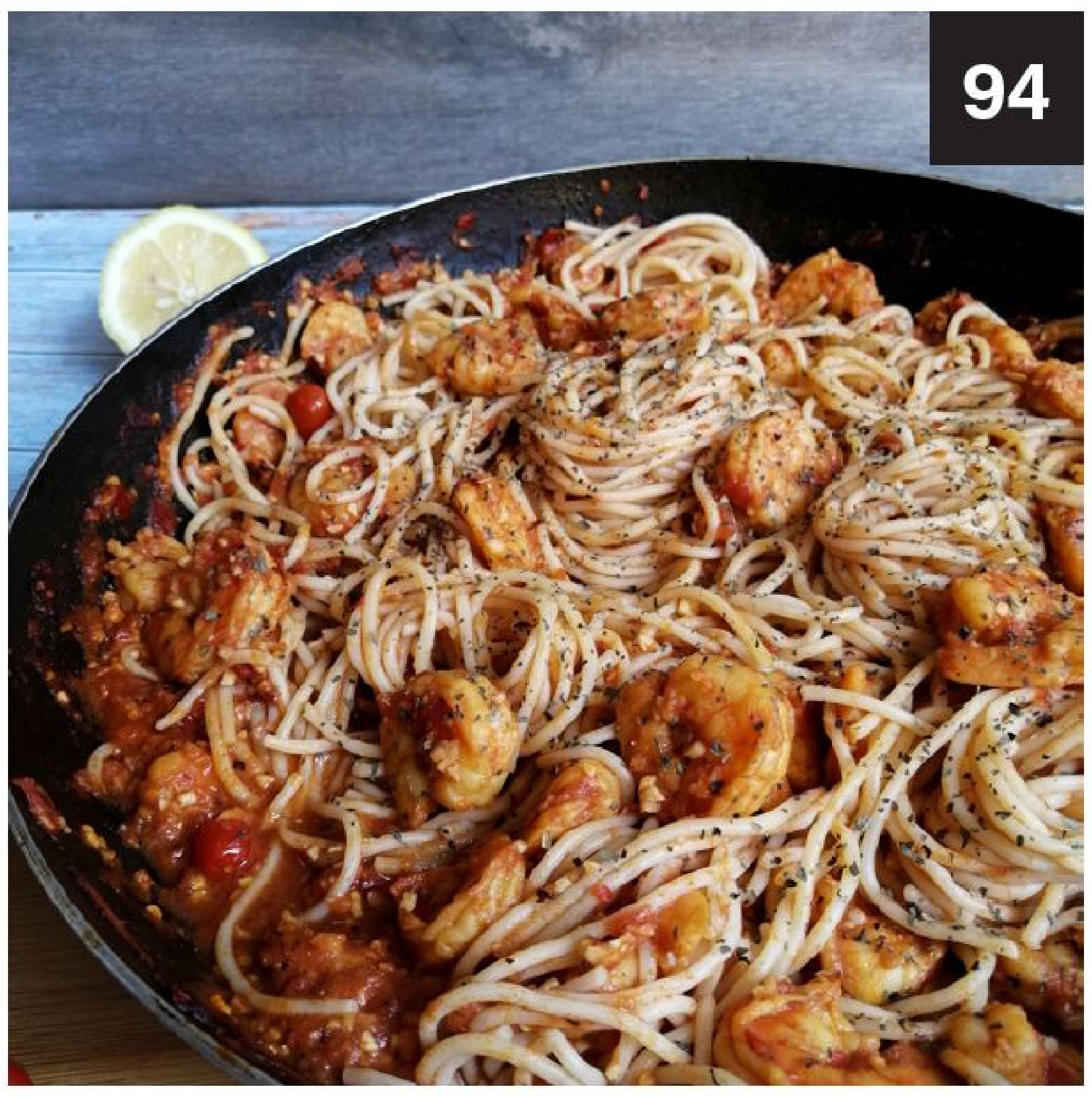

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My Spiritual Awakening in Makkah and Madinah During Ramadan

By Natasha Syed

As the blessed month of Ramadan approached, I knew this year would be unlike any other. There was a feeling in the air, an anticipation that seemed to whisper, "This is your time to connect." With that thought in mind, I found myself on a plane heading towards the heart of Islam, to Makkah and Madinah, to witness firsthand the beauty of these sacred cities during the most revered month in the Islamic calendar. What I didn't expect, however, was how much more than just a spiritual journey it would turn out to be. It became a journey of the soul, of reflection, and of deep gratitude.

My first stop was Makkah, where the magnificent sight of the *Kaaba* in Masjid al-Haram overwhelmed me with a sense of awe and reverence. The bustling city, filled with people from all walks of life, was alive with an energy I could feel in every corner. The entire month of Ramadan took on a different hue here, as every prayer seemed to feel deeper, every supplication more intense.

I had planned my trip meticulously to work UK hours for the first few weeks, knowing that the last ten days would be a time for uninterrupted worship and reflection. During the day, I worked from my hotel room, but as the evening drew near, the air would shift. Al Aqeeq Hotel in Makkah and Madinah offered an exceptional experience with its strong Wi-Fi, outstanding hospitality, and incredibly comfortable stay, making it the perfect home away from home during Ramadan.

The streets outside would become busier, more vibrant, and the sweet anticipation of *iftar* would fill the air.

One of the most nostalgic aspects of my stay was the food. The iftar and suhoor meals brought back memories of Pakistan — dishes rich in flavour, spices, and warmth that reminded me of home. Whether it was the fresh naan and curries from Al Baik or the traditional biryani from the restaurant across the street, the food felt like a warm embrace from Pakistan. It was comfort food at its finest, offering a taste of home even thousands of miles away.

Madinah was a place where time seemed to slow down. Being so close to the Prophet's (pbuh) Mosque, I found myself in constant awe of the proximity to such history. Staying just a few steps away from Masjid Nabawi allowed me to focus intensely on my faith, where the sound of the Adhan would call me to prayer multiple times a day, and the atmosphere of devotion made me feel closer to my Creator than ever before. For the first time, I felt I had found the balance I had been searching for throughout my entire life.

For those who haven't experienced Madinah during Ramadan, it's hard to capture in words just how serene and inspiring it truly is. Each day, I would immerse myself in prayer and reflection, but it wasn't just the proximity to the mosque that deepened my connection. I had a book with me that would become my companion throughout the journey: Al Madinah Al Munawwarah by Aurar Vedachhia. This book helped me trace the footsteps of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the historical and sacred sites of Madinah.

The maps provided in the book were detailed and well-researched, offering QR codes for further exploration. I used these maps to visit various sites around the city, including the famous garden of Salman Al-Farsi, which many visitors miss. The lush greenery and tranquil atmosphere were a stark contrast to the bustling streets of the city, and walking through it felt like a privilege. The garden was not only beautiful but also rich with history — it was here that Salman Al-Farsi's garden stood, a place where our Prophet (pbuh) had once walked.

The book also led me to the well of Baqi‘, where the Prophet (pbuh) drank water, and the area surrounding it — each site offered its own unique history, a history I could feel in the very air and amongst the people of this area. It was as though each corner of Madinah was whispering stories of the past, of sacrifices, of faith, and of the eternal love for the Prophet (pbuh).

One of the best ways to explore Madinah was by renting

Dua for Iftar (Breaking the Fast):

اللهم إني لك صمت، وبك آمنت، وعليك توكلت، وعليك فوضت، وبك خاصمت، اللهم إني أسالك برحمتك التي وسعت كل شيء أن تغفر لي

"Allahumma inni laka sumtu, wa bika aamantu, wa 'alayka tawakkaltu, wa ilayka fawwadtu, wa bika khasamtu, Allahumma inni as'alu ka birahmatika allati wasi'at kulla shay'in an taghfira li."

— O Allah, I fasted for You, I believe in You, I put my trust in You, and I place my affairs in Your hands. I argue only for Your sake. O Allah, I ask You by Your mercy, which encompasses everything, to forgive me.

Dua for Suhoor (Pre-Dawn Meal):

اللهم بارك لنا في suhoorنا، واغفر لنا ما تقدم من ذنوبنا، واجعلنا من أهل الجنة

"Allahumma barik lana fi suhoorina, waghfir lana ma taqaddama min dhunubina, wa ajilna min ahlil Jannah."

— O Allah, bless our suhoor, forgive us for our past sins, and make us among the people of Jannah (paradise).

a car. It's an affordable and convenient option, with rental rates starting at just £43 per day. I rented my car from Budget for 3 days and then Yelo and explored the city at my own pace. Madinah has so much to offer, from the historical sites like Jannat al-Baqi and Quba Mosque to the rich heritage of the Uhud Mountain. With a car, I was able to visit places that might have been difficult to reach on foot.

For those who prefer a more leisurely way to explore, I highly recommend renting a Careem bike. At just £5-6 per day, or £10 for a week, the bikes are an inexpensive and fun way to get around. Careem bike stations are located throughout Madinah, and I loved the freedom it gave me to ride through the streets, exploring the hidden gems of the city.

A unique experience was discovering the rooftop of Masjid Nabawi, which isn't widely known among visitors. Accessible via gates 5, 8, 10, 17, 21, 36, and 37 to name a few, this special area offers a rare opportunity for men to get a bird's-eye view of the mosque's stunning architecture and the bustling courtyards below. It was humbling to see the scale of the mosque from above, and it deepened my appreciation for its sanctity. Remember, only Men can access the rooftop.

As Ramadan drew to a close, the excitement of Eid was palpable. In Madinah, the celebrations were unlike anything I had ever experienced. People would wake up early in the morning, dressed in their finest clothes, and head to the mosque for the Eid prayers. The sense of community and joy was contagious, and it felt like the whole city was united in their gratitude for the blessings of the month. In the UK, Eid is often celebrated with big functions, parties, and entertainment, filled with loud music and shows. I won't lie, while those celebrations are fun, it was a refreshing change to be in Madinah during Ramadan and Eid, surrounded by Muslims who celebrated in a more subdued, spiritual way. There were no distractions, just prayers, reflections, and heartfelt gratitude. It felt like I was experiencing Eid in its truest form, with the focus entirely on faith, community, and the blessings of the occasion.

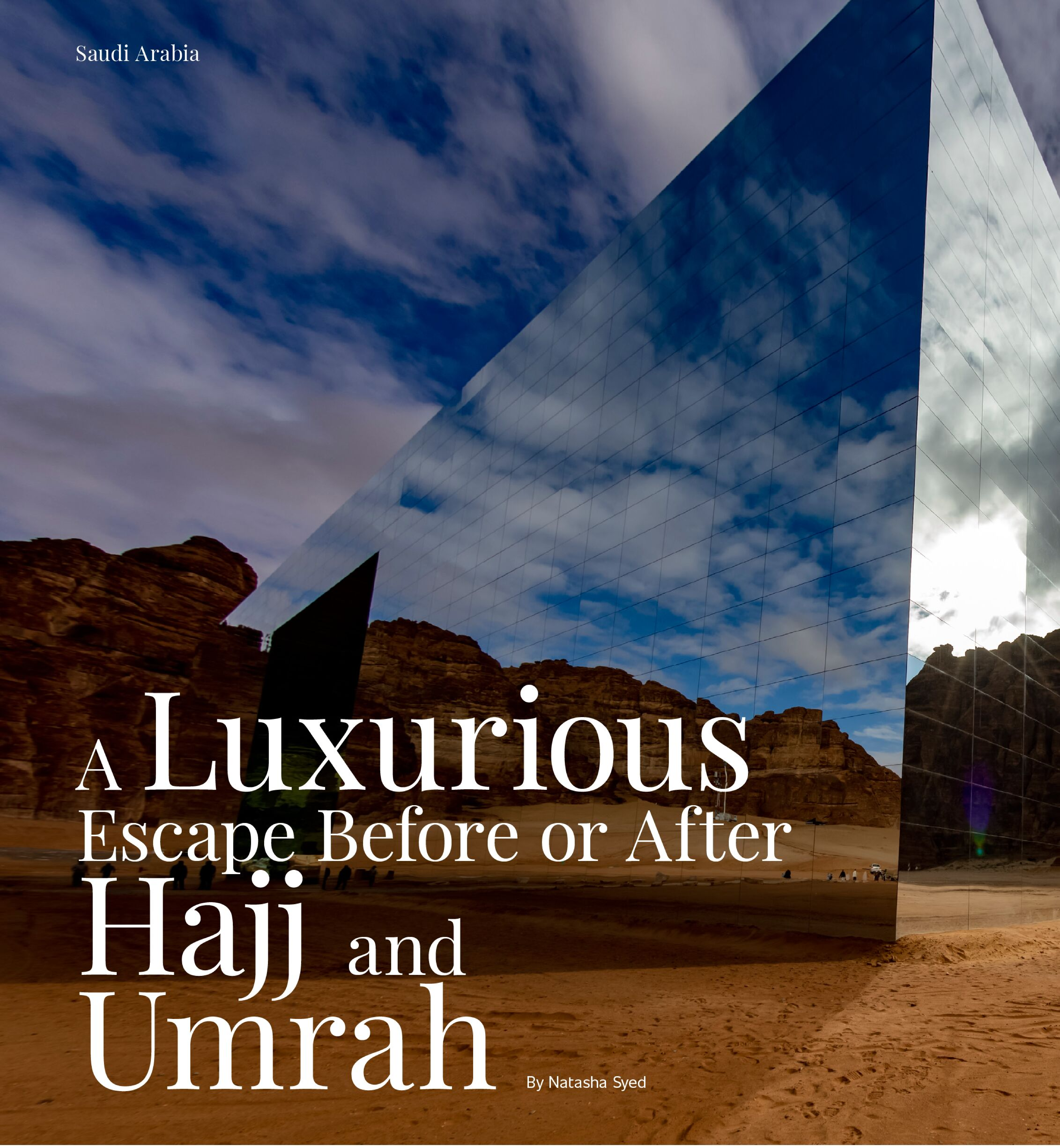
The streets were lined with people exchanging greetings, children running around with excitement, and the smell of fresh food & Oud filling the air. For me, it was a moment of profound reflection. Eid in Madinah is a time to come together, to celebrate, and to remember the importance of faith, humility, and gratitude.

Visiting Makkah and Madinah during Ramadan was an experience beyond words. It was a transformative journey that deepened my connection to Allah (SWT) and the legacy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), while also bringing me closer to my own heart and soul.

The peacefulness, the opportunity for reflection, and the chance to really focus on my faith gave me time to pause and be grateful for all that I have. Every prayer, every moment of silence, and every act of worship seemed more meaningful as I walked through the same streets where the Prophet (PBUH) once walked.

It was a time to reflect on the true essence of Ramadan, to appreciate the blessings in my life, and to remember the importance of faith in every step I take. The journey wasn't just about visiting sacred sites or tasting delicious food; it was about soul-searching, connecting with the divine, and, most of all, being truly present in the moment.

Ramadan in Makkah and Madinah will always remain one of the most cherished experiences of my life — a reminder of the beauty of our faith and the endless mercy of Allah (saw).



A Luxurious Escape Before or After Hajj and Umrah

By Natasha Syed

For Muslim travellers looking for that sacred journey of Hajj or Umrah, Saudi Arabia holds immense spiritual significance. While the pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah fulfils a deep religious purpose, there is an opportunity to extend the journey into a realm of discovery, relaxation, and luxury. Enter AlUla—an extraordinary desert oasis that offers travellers space to revitalise and reset, a serene retreat amidst breathtaking landscapes, rich heritage, and world-class experiences. Now fully open and welcoming global visitors, AlUla is an unmissable addition to a pilgrimage itinerary, combining spiritual reflection with indulgent exploration.

AlUla truly is a hidden gem in northwest Saudi Arabia, spanning 22,300 square kilometres and steeped in history that dates back thousands of years. Once a vital stop along the Incense Road, this ancient crossroads of civilisations was historically a hub of trade, culture, and religious exchange. Today, AlUla stands as a testament to this rich heritage, with UNESCO-listed sites, awe-inspiring natural wonders, and luxurious hospitality offerings.

One of AlUla's crowning jewels is Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. This remarkable Nabataean city, the kingdom's principal southern sister city of Petra, boasts over 110 well-preserved tombs carved into sandstone cliffs, showcasing intricate Greco-Roman influences. For travellers seeking a deep historical connection, the Hegra Day Tour or Hegra After Dark experiences provide an immersive glimpse into this ancient civilisation.

Beyond Hegra, AlUla is home to Dadan and Jabal Ikmah, where ongoing archaeological excavations continue to reveal lost treasures of Arabian history. Jabal Ikmah, often called an "open-air library," is adorned with thousands of inscriptions in ancient languages, offering a glimpse into the lives of those who once called this land home.

After the physically and emotionally demanding pilgrimage of Hajj or Umrah, AlUla serves as a sanctuary of peace and rejuvenation. The AlUla Oasis, with its lush date palm groves and citrus orchards, offers a refreshing environment to unwind and reflect on the spiritual journey before heading back to the UK.

For those seeking holistic well-being, AlUla is fast emerging as a premier spa and wellness destination. The Banyan Tree AlUla and Our Habitas AlUla provide world-class spa treatments, desert meditation sessions, and wellness experiences that nurture the body and soul. Imagine engaging in yoga and meditation in the oasis, followed by sound therapy and desert drumming sessions, all set against the stunning backdrop of AlUla's golden sands and dramatic rock formations.

AlUla is not just about history and relaxation—it's also an adventurer's paradise. The region offers unique activities that allow travellers to experience its landscape from exhilarating new perspectives.

For a bird's-eye view, visitors can hop on a hot air balloon ride or a helicopter tour, soaring above AlUla's sandstone mountains and ancient settlements. Those seeking thrills can take part in rock climbing, abseiling, ziplining, hiking or a 4WD tour through Sharaan Nature Reserve—an untouched expanse that reveals the raw beauty of the Arabian desert.

Alternatively, for a more tranquil experience, AlUla offers stargazing at Gharameel, where expert guides narrate the celestial stories of the Arabian sky. Far removed from city lights, the desert comes alive with an awe-inspiring display of stars, making for a truly magical and meditative experience.

AlUla has rapidly evolved into a world-class luxury destination, boasting an array of high-end accommodations and gourmet dining options. The region is home to some of Saudi Arabia's most exclusive hotels, including:

- Banyan Tree AlUla – Private villas with plunge pools and an opulent spa
- Our Habitas AlUla – Eco-luxury resort with immersive cultural experiences
- Dar Tantora The House Hotel – A boutique stay in the heart of AlUla's Old Town
- Chedi Hegra – A heritage-inspired hotel set within the historic landscape of Hegra

For culinary enthusiasts, AlUla offers plenty of diverse dining experiences, ranging from gourmet international cuisine to traditional Saudi flavours. Visitors can indulge in fresh local produce from the oasis at Somewhere, Tawlet Fayza or more international flavours Maraya Social or a seasonal pop up restaurant such as Ducasse AlUlaall with farm-to-table delights made with local dates, citrus fruits, and enjoy food with aromatic spices and fresh herbs

AlUla is not only a place of natural and historical wonders but also a burgeoning hub for art and culture. The region hosts annual festivals and art exhibitions, bringing contemporary creativity to this ancient land. The AlUla Arts Festival and Desert X AlUla showcase thought-provoking installations, while Madrasat Addeera offers workshops for the local community in traditional crafts, ensuring that age-old techniques continue to thrive.

At the heart of AlUla's cultural landscape is Maraya, the world's largest mirrored building. This architectural marvel blends seamlessly with the desert and has hosted world-renowned performers such as Andrea Bocelli, John Legend, and Alicia Keys. A behind-the-scenes tour of Maraya provides insight into its design and the vision that has transformed AlUla into a global arts capital.

The Ideal Stopover: Convenient and Accessible

AlUla is easily accessible for travellers coming to or from Makkah and Madinah, with all-year-round flights and seasonal connections to major international hubs like Dubai, Qatar, and Jordan. The recommended stay is at least four nights and five days to truly appreciate the destination's offerings.

For the best experience, visitors should plan their trip between October and March, when AlUla's seasonal events, pop-up restaurants, and cooler weather create an ideal travel setting.

For Muslim travellers, a trip to AlUla before or after Hajj or Umrah offers an unparalleled opportunity to blend spiritual fulfilment with luxurious exploration and relaxation with friends and family. Whether meditating in the tranquil oasis, or gazing at the stars in the desert sky, AlUla provides a transformative experience that lingers long after the journey ends.

As Saudi Arabia continues to open its doors to global travellers, AlUla stands as a beacon of heritage, adventure, and elegance with Saudi hospitality. So, why not extend your pilgrimage with an unforgettable stay in this breathtaking oasis, where history, culture, and luxury converge in perfect harmony?

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UNVEIL THE WONDERS OF SAUDI ARABIA: RED SEA, ALULA AND UMRAH

Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastline, the desert oasis of AlUla and the spiritual journey of Umrah offer a captivating blend of scenic beauty, historical wonders and profound religious significance. The Red Sea is perfect for water activities featuring clear waters, vibrant coral reefs and beautiful beaches. Whilst AlUla is a hidden treasure, where over 200,000 years of human history converge with the artistry of stunning natural environments and monumental landscapes, a green life-giving oasis and quintessential Arabian hospitality. For those seeking a spiritual experience, Umrah provides a sacred journey offering a deep connection to the history and culture of Saudi Arabia. Whether enjoying the coastal beauty, exploring ancient landmarks or embarking on a spiritual journey, these destinations offer a diverse range of experiences for every traveller.

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A Dreamy Escape to Sun Siyam Iru Veli Resort: Our Slice of Paradise in the Maldives

The moment our seaplane glided over the dazzling turquoise waters of the Maldives, we felt as though we had been transported to a world of pure enchantment—where time slows, and nature's beauty embraces you in a way that makes your heart soar. By Natasha Syed

Iru Veli Maldives, part of Sun Siyam Resorts, is not just a destination, but a dream come to life, the ultimate escape for honeymooners seeking romance, adventure, and blissful seclusion. From the sky, the scattered islands shimmer like emerald jewels set in the vastness of the Indian Ocean, and as the seaplane descended, we felt the anticipation build—paradise was just moments away.

A sleek boat whisked us over gentle waves to the island, and with every passing moment, the reality of Sun Siyam Iru Veli's magic drew closer. Our arrival was nothing short of spectacular. Greeted by smiling faces, rhythmic drumming, and the sweet, refreshing taste of watermelon and peach mocktails, it was clear that Iru Veli knows how to make you feel like royalty from the very first moment. The hospitality was not just welcoming—it was heart-warming, creating an instant sense of home amidst the beauty. As we explored the island, it felt like a hidden gem awaiting our discovery.

From the crystal-clear waters lapping at the shores to the lush tropical greenery, every inch of Iru Veli invited us to linger a little longer, to savour the moments. Our suite was a sanctuary of luxury, with a private pool overlooking the white sandy beach. It felt like our very own slice of heaven—complete with an outdoor shower, his-and-her sinks, and a breath-taking view of the endless ocean.

Each meal at Iru Veli was a celebration of flavour and indulgence. Whether it was the buffet lunch bursting with fresh Maldivian curries, fragrant noodles, and tropical fruits, or the more intimate beachfront dinners, every bite was a delight, and each meal felt like a culinary journey. Dining

mage Credit – American Green Travel, unsplash

here was not just about food, it was about romance—about sharing moments that linger in your memory long after you've left. But the beauty of Iru Veli extends far beyond the comforts of luxury. For those seeking adventure, the island offers an abundance of thrilling experiences. We dove into the crystal waters, snorkelling through vibrant coral reefs alive with tropical fish and manta rays. We swam alongside baby sharks in awe of the marine world that thrived just below the surface. For a touch of adrenaline, we watched couples take flight on flyboards, soaring above the waves—a reminder that this paradise is as adventurous as it is serene.

One of the most magical moments was our morning breakfast, floating in our private pool, as the golden sunlight filtered through the palm trees. It was the kind of experience you see in movies—the ultimate in romantic indulgence. We couldn't help but feel like we were living a dream, and every detail felt thoughtfully designed to deepen that sense of intimacy.

Iru Veli offers more than just sun-soaked days and romantic dinners. For those in search of tranquillity, the spa is an oasis of calm, where treatments using organic, local ingredients leave you feeling more connected to the island's natural beauty.

We were fortunate enough to take a private boat to a nearby island, where we got an incredible behind-the-scenes look at where the local produce was grown. It felt like we were stepping into a secret garden, a place where nature's wonders quietly thrived. For the first time, we saw fruits and vegetables we'd only ever encountered at the market growing right before our eyes—Papayas hanging from trees, Passionfruit vines weaving their way around trellises, and clusters of bananas ripening in the warm sun.

Even pumpkins, with their bright orange skin peeking through the greenery, seemed like hidden treasures waiting to be discovered. It was eye-opening and exciting, as if we were learning the origins of these familiar foods all over again. Watching the plants flourish in their natural environment, it made us appreciate the journey of these vibrant fruits from soil to table. We couldn't help but be amazed at the richness of life this small island nurtured, a simple yet extraordinary reminder of the beauty that nature gifts us.

As we explored the island, we were reminded that the Maldives is a Muslim country, and the culture here reflects that beautifully. For those keen to keep up with their prayers, Sun Siyam Iru Veli has a dedicated mosque on the island, offering a peaceful space to pray. If you prefer, you can also pray in the privacy of your room, where everything you need for a serene moment of worship is easily accessible. The island truly caters to every need, making it easy to embrace both adventure and spiritual reflection.

And if you want to reconnect with yourself or your partner in a deeper way, their sunrise and sunset yoga sessions are truly soul-soothing—imagine stretching with the sound of the ocean as the sun paints the sky in brilliant hues of gold and pink. Evenings at Iru Veli are like stepping into a celebration of life and love. The resort comes alive with vibrant entertainment, from captivating live shows to soothing melodies, creating the perfect backdrop for an unforgettable night. It's not just entertainment—it's a magical atmosphere that brings people together, creating memories that last a lifetime. What truly sets Iru Veli apart is the sense of solitude and privacy.

Even with all these incredible amenities, we often felt like we had the island to ourselves. Whether we were lounging by the pool, cycling through the tropical paths, or gazing at the stars on the beach, it was as though the island had been crafted just for us. That feeling of having your own

private sanctuary, far removed from the world, is what makes Iru Veli the perfect destination for a honeymoon.

If you're dreaming of a place where romance, adventure, and tranquillity converge, where every day feels like a magical celebration of love and life, then Sun Siyam Iru Veli Maldives is waiting to make your dreams come true. Here, time stands still, and you'll find yourself lost in the beauty of the moment, over and over again.

Book at Sunsiyam.com to unlock exclusive offers.

Sun Siyam Iru Veli: Sun Siyam Resorts has five private island resorts in the Maldives and a boutique beach resort on the east coast of Sri Lanka. At Sun Siyam Iru Veli prices start from $750 / £576 per night for two adults sharing a Beach Villa with Pool on all-inclusive. Book at sunsiyam.com to unlock exclusive offers.

Qatar Airways flies from London with return fares starting from £660 in economy and £2,606 in business subject to availability and subject to change. Business class passengers have access to a choice of world-class lounges at Hama International Airport, Doha, just ranked 'Best Airport in the World 2024' by Skytrax. This includes Qatar Airways' newest The Garden lounge.

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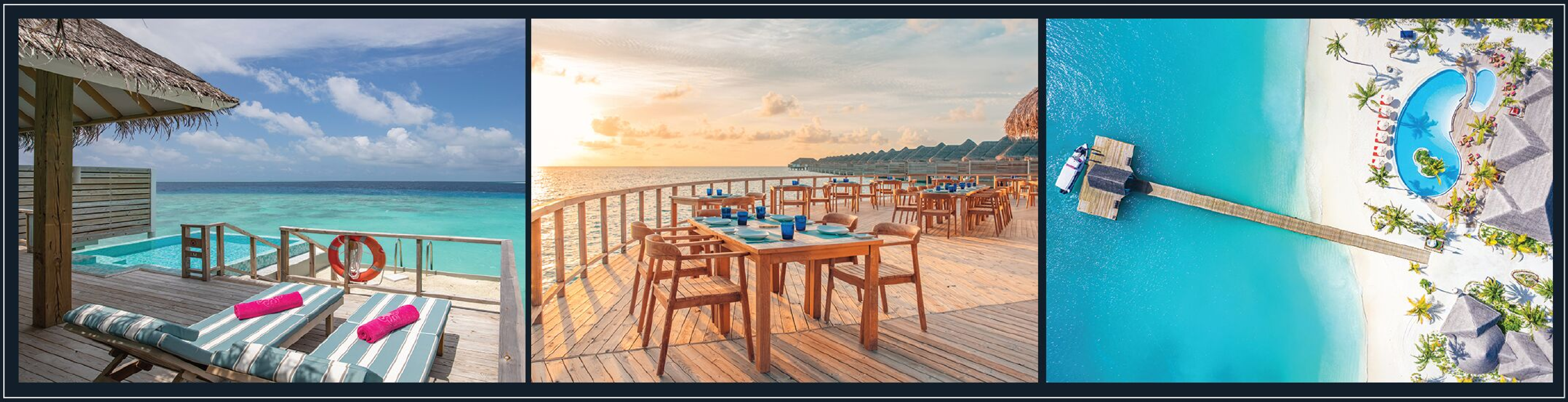
Step into a world where crystal-clear lagoons meet pristine white sands. At Sun Siyam Iru Veli every sunrise is a masterpiece and every moment is yours to design. Whether you dream of waking up in an overwater villa, stepping onto the beach from your private suite or sipping cocktails under the stars, Southall Travel brings you an array of packages to make your Maldives escape truly unforgettable. With so many choices tailored to suit every traveller, your perfect island retreat is closer than you think.



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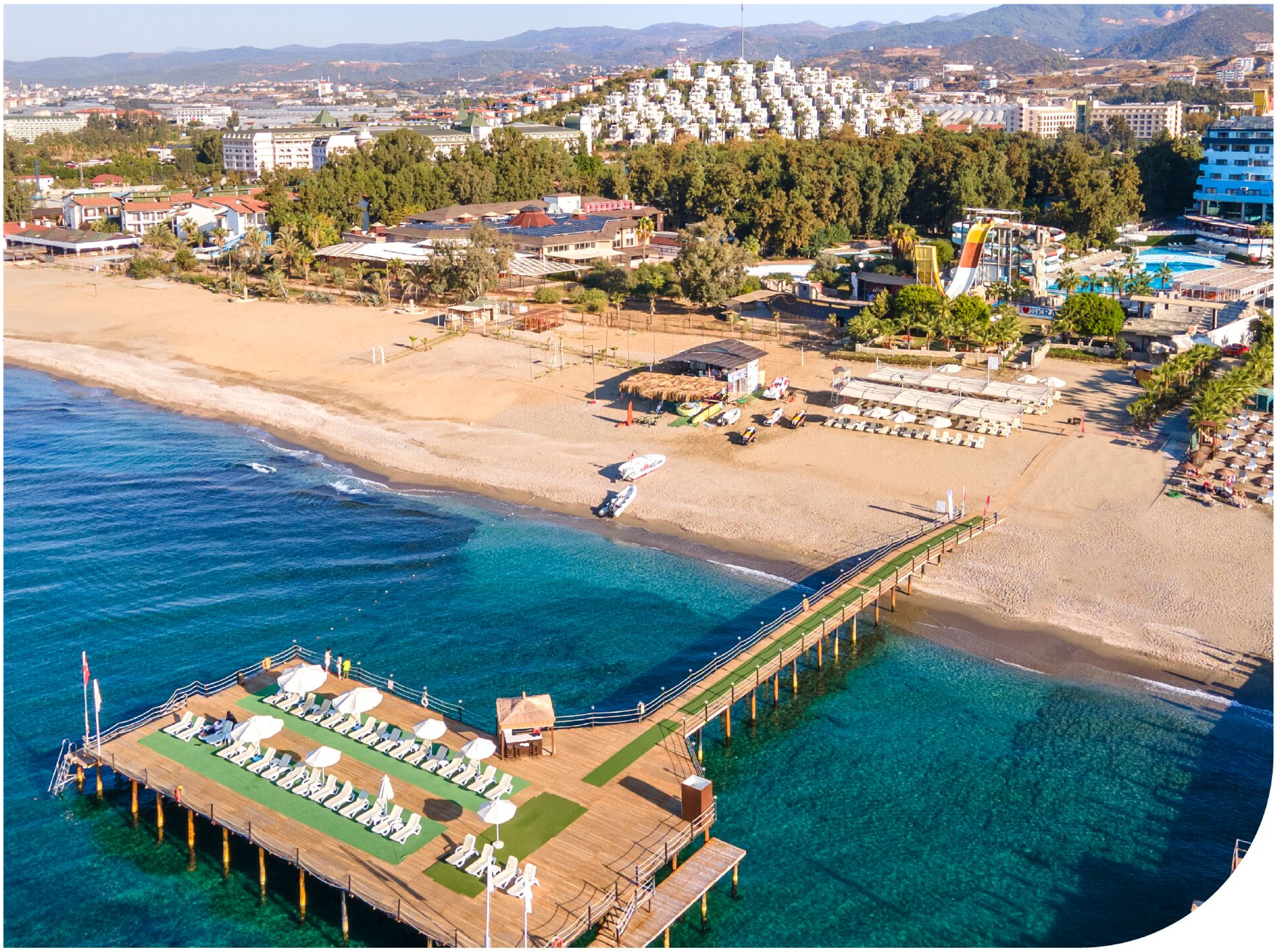
Celebrating Female Halal Havens

Tahira Khan Explores Two Halal Beach Hotels for Women in the Turkish Riviera



Halal tourism has seen significant growth over the past two decades. Among the countries catering to Muslim travellers, Turkey ranks in one of the top Muslim women-friendly destinations, providing safety, faith-based experiences, and exclusive facilities for women. With more countries over the globe recognising the demand, according to the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2024 report.

Bera Resorts Hotel Manager Ruhat Ülgen Cengiz stated, 'The government and Turkey in general don't recognise halal tourism as a separate sector, but it is one that contributes significantly to both the Turkish and global economies".

As a Muslim female traveller; my concerns and preferences are to have separate amenities for women, no alcohol and praying facilities. This is where I observe how halal it really gets.

The Bera Alanya Resort.

The Bera Alanya Resort is a world-class all-inclusive resort hotel in the charming Turkish region of Konakli, Antalya. The resort is known for its idyllic picturesque scenery of palm trees, golden beaches and the perfect Mediterranean ambiance. Surrounded by the scenery of the stunning Taurus Mountains and Damlatas Cave, which is an enchanting cave with fifteen thousand years of history. Alaettinoglu Cultural Park offers activities such as jeep safaris, quad biking and paragliding. Sarapsa Han Caravansera is an ancient fortress in Konakli steeped in history. It also houses a small mosque that is still used for religious purposes. Whereas Konakli Mosque, the main mosque is an eight-minute drive from the hotel, is visited for peaceful prayers behind the muezzin.

The resort, resembling a grand cruise liner from a distance, features rooms with balconies that offer stunning views of the inner atrium. As I stroll towards the breakfast area, the peaceful recitation of the Qur'an filled the air from the non-alcoholic bar. Here, guests are enjoying a variety of beverages such as homemade lemonade, hot drinks, and rich Turkish coffee - a delightful way to kickstart the day. The extravagant patiserrie on the ground floor and shopping facilities are also an added bonus.

The resort is designed to symbolise a combination of family fun and integrated relaxation for everyone. The halal-friendly, alcohol-free seafront resort has a mixed-gender beach and pool area, as well as dedicated women-only and men-only indoor and outdoor pools. I also witness a live performance at the amphitheater by Cüneyt Güzel, a talented singer who reached the semi-finals of Turkey's The Voice competition. He captivated the audience with his powerful vocals.

The resort's general manager also emphasises the importance of hospitality to her staff, highlighting it as a sacred duty, especially for Muslims. She encouraged her employees to follow the example set by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who personally attended to and served

I ❤ Bera
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his guests with utmost care and generosity. She reminded them that even if they have little to offer, they should always be willing to share, just as the Prophet (PBUH) did when he shared his last piece of bread with his guests.

There are impressive segregated fitness and wellness facililties for both genders and the spa area provides an amazing thermal spa alongwith traditional Turkish hammam and beauty treatments separately for both men and women.

The resort ensures that all the food served is strictly halal, eliminating any concerns about non-halal items like pork or even additives like gelatine being present in the buffet. Additionally, the absence of alcohol is a welcome sight. As a foodie, what excites me most is the grand display of food available in the breakfast buffet, with endless options. This outdoor terrace and eating area near the aqua park and children's beach make the views very pleasant, but just a sidenote, be aware of the loud music blasting from the children's aquapark from a distance if you prefer a quieter morning.

I am pleasantly surprised to discover that every detail for a Muslim traveller has been meticulously thought out. For example a charming straw prayer hut is set up on the beach allows me the convenience of performing my prayers without having to rush back to my room. I can simply perform my ablutions in the sea or under the beach showers before offering my prayers there. The beach itself is on point in its level of cleanliness, and I didn't see any litter. Bera Alanya even boasts its own mosque where Friday prayers are conducted every week, complete with an imam delivering the sermon. The Aquapark is one of the biggest water parks in Alanya, with lots of slides and fun for the whole family. Sealanya Dolphin Park is a nearby water park that also offers the opportunity to swim with the dolphins. Swimwear regulations are enforced only on mixed-gender beaches, along with strict security protocols regarding photography and limitations on social media posting to protect privacy. Additionally, there is a men-only outdoor terrace on the ground level. The hotel offers exclusive private saunas and jacuzzi's in specific junior, senior, and grand suites. One of the highlights of this resort is the selection of beverages served in the reception lounge, with the unlimited iced coffee being my personal favourite especially when it hits the 3'oclock slump. One other aspect which reassured me was how much the resort cared for the planet and committed to eco-conscious practices and sustainability efforts across the entire property.

The Adin Beach Hotel and Resort

This luxury boutique hotel, also located in Alanya, is one of the rare esablishments that provides a private beach exclusively for women. The exquisite hotel is positioned away from the women's beach, with tall sails surrounding the swimming area to ensure complete privacy. A small mixed beach also separates the women's and men's beaches, lined with snack bars and a grill restaurant. Next to the women's beach lies an outdoor pool, secluded by palm trees from the main road. Each gender-segregated beach boasts its own prayer facilities creating an atmosphere of freedom for female guests whether they are indulging in the spa and Turkish hammam or savouring snacks by the pool.

Adin caters exceptionally well for women, the female-only spaces and amenities available is an incredible eye opener. As a gym bunny and swimmer, I felt free to pamper myself during the day in the sun-lounging areas. An array of umbrellas, lounges and cushions sweep across the shoreline. I curb my hunger after a detoxifying salty swim in the female beach area. I order a mocktail and almonds from the snack bar on my way back to the hotel. In the evening, I take a relaxing stroll on the pier and watch the sun set in the horizon.

On the start of my morning. I head down for breakfast and the food buffet is deluxe, not as overwhelming as Bera. I had a refreshing view of the sea whilst enjoying my Turkish omelette with a mezze salad. It is an energising yet peaceful start to the day, I think.

The hotel itself, it's definitely luxury boutique, smaller in size, offering so much variety whilst still being opulent, light and airy. I visit the female wellness area which includes a thermal spa. I opt for a medical full body massage similar to a sports massage at a fraction of the cost. The only difference is my therapist uses a self- heating balm, great for my sore muscles after the swimming session.

On my way back, I glance at the posters listing the variety of daily activities for children. From tennis, mini golfing, gym and water sports; there is a games arcade too. In close proximity, there is a soft play gym and roleplay town staffed by childcare professionals, allowing parents to relax knowing their children are being well taken care of nearby.

I enquired about what happens in a medical emergency scenario, and the manager reassured me “we have male lifeguards and female lifeguards, who are very experienced and well trained in the women's section, or male lifeguards

in the male section. That's the same principle with the first aiders, who are female and vice versa in the men's section". Hmm well thought again, the rating went up in my head.

I headed out from the hotel and just a few minutes walking distance away, I notice a parade of local shops in rows. Here I was able to purchase souvenir gifts, pistachio home-made Turkish delight and sport accessories. I was in absolute stitches when I saw the replica of Primark, and looked nothing like the retail chain. I am proud of myself for my well-earned pair of Nike Air Jordan limited edition trainers after haggling them down to twenty- five euros, luckily the staff are English speaking otherwise there was no chance. I rush back to the resort in excitement to share my achievement with my fellow female travellers.

The selection of eateries such as an A la Carte restaurant, a snacking bar, and patisseries too never left any gap for hunger. There's lots going on such at the aqua park, and then there's the pavilion. There were a few couples celebrating their honeymoons too. Overall, it is a laid-back atmosphere at Adin, where families gathered on the spacious outdoor terrace overlooking the sea and relaxing, sipping Turkish tea. Whilst maintain the balance with entertainment nights, live performances and as a separate cinema.

Rest assured ladies especially, you will find not just an amazing hotel, but also peace of mind. I was able to fully enjoy relax and have fun, while still fulfilling my Islamic obligations in a peaceful and convenient environment.

Credit: Tahira Khan/Images: Halal Booking

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Greece

Kefalonia, Serenity, Sunsets, and Simple Pleasures

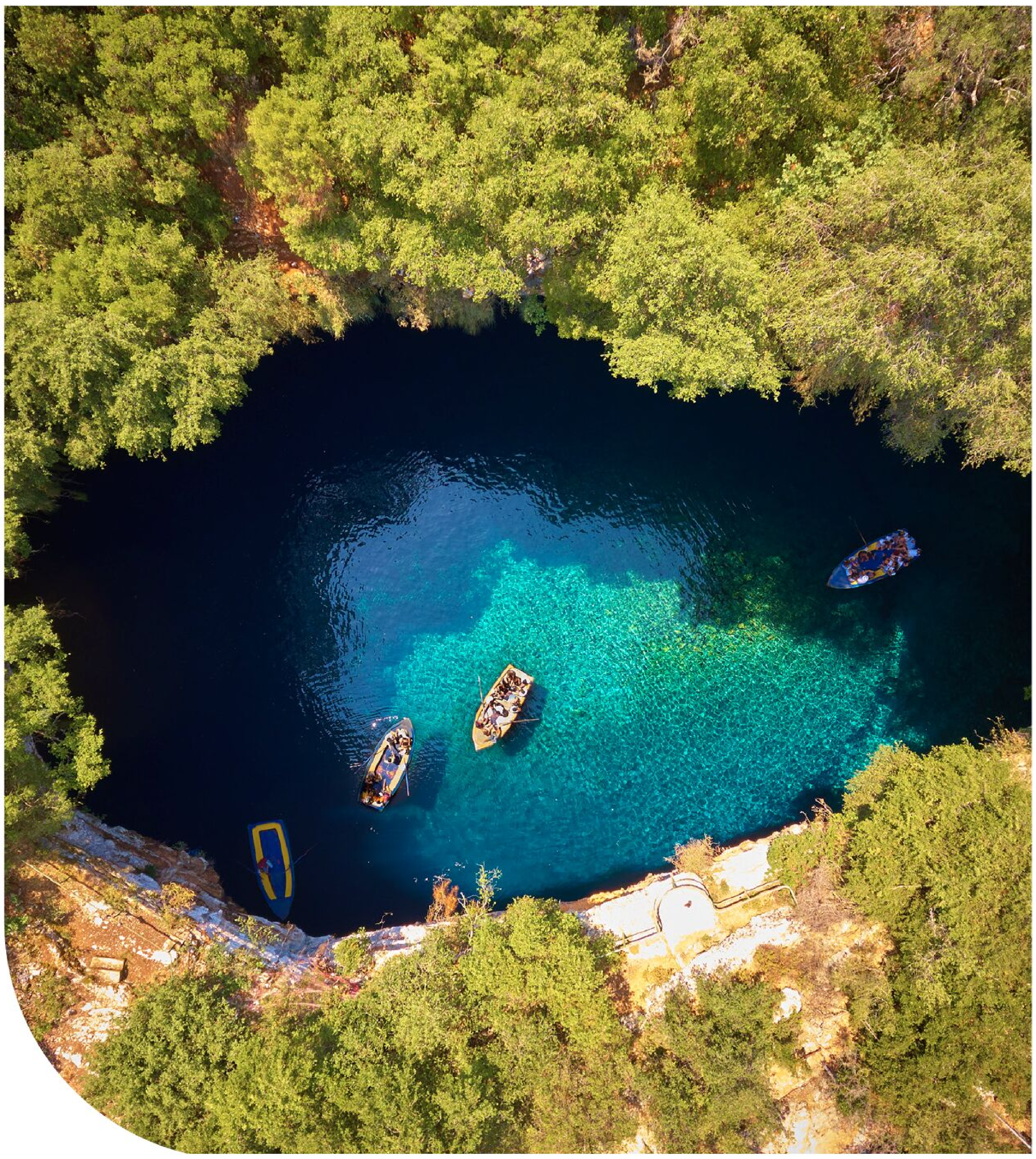
In the heart of Kefalonia's tranquil landscapes, where goats roam free and sunsets paint the sky, Adam Jacot de Boinod takes us on a journey through the island's peaceful beauty. From the serenity of Elia Villa to the charm of local tavernas and the magic of the Ionian Sea, this is an invitation to experience a hidden gem of Greece, untouched by the usual tourist rush.

I really do invite you to picture a landscape of white rocks and of fecund brown earth, of silvery olive groves and of pine conifers. All set beneath the bluest of skies and beside the vivid green glory of cypress trees. For here, in this pastoral and idyllic setting, the animals are free-ranging and typically stray. Goats and sheep roam the roads and dogs guard the territory while cats gather to populate the village piazzas. Cockerels announce what Homer once described as the rosy-fingered dawn.

Here on the west coast I savoured a totally different landscape from the rest of Kefalonia. Indeed this miraculous and mazy landscape, with its mini-peaks and plains, led back to my childhood with its maps of The Hobbit and Narnia.

In covering the extreme parts of this peninsula I loved the random nature of the farms whose land was worked upon in lengthy shifts by dedicated hands. The scarce villages presented different slopes and terraces, churches and grocery shops. My favourite two were Kaminarata, called 'the balcony of Kefalonia' whose panoramic views stretched across the peninsula and also Havdata with her wedding-cake-like tiers of habitation.

I was lucky enough to stay at Elia Villa, a newly finished property (https://alekos.eu/index.php/elia), very much the choice villa of the Alekos Beach Houses group (www.alekosbeachhouses.com). It is set supremely beneath a craggy bluff and is backed by gorgeous olive groves whose



this miraculous and mazy landscape, with its mini-peaks and plain.....

woody aroma, from being picked and scorched, was deeply welcoming. It overlooks a stunning panorama over Kefalonia's major gulf with as much grace and serenity as I saw in the Italian Lakes. Here seagulls hover over fishermen's boats as ferries glide like swans. As the heat departs the pink sky arrives over a teal water on which the moon reflects and towers above the hills and Mount Ainos beyond.

The interior is zen and über-chic. Beneath a beamed roof reminscent of beach huts this villa has a calm, horizontal vibe with all three bedrooms looking out to sea. Its modern, neutral beauty is understated, letting the glorious view outside take centre stage

It can accommodate six and, with no stairs, it's perfect for a small family though wouldn't feel overwhelming for a couple. I can quite see why the architect Dionysis Avgoustinos has a reputation that precedes him. Truly a dream holiday getaway.

Elia Villa is a short walk from Lixouri, the local town, where you'll find the portside restaurant Akrogiali, meaning 'coastline', and true to its maritime character old wooden beams hung above harbour scenes with its ships from the olden days. This Lixourian institution, the oldest in town, offers traditional Greek cuisine and also serves as a grill house.

Open for both lunch and dinner across the year it's clearly popular with locals which is always a good sign. I tried the 'spanakopita,' a favorite dish of spinach and feta

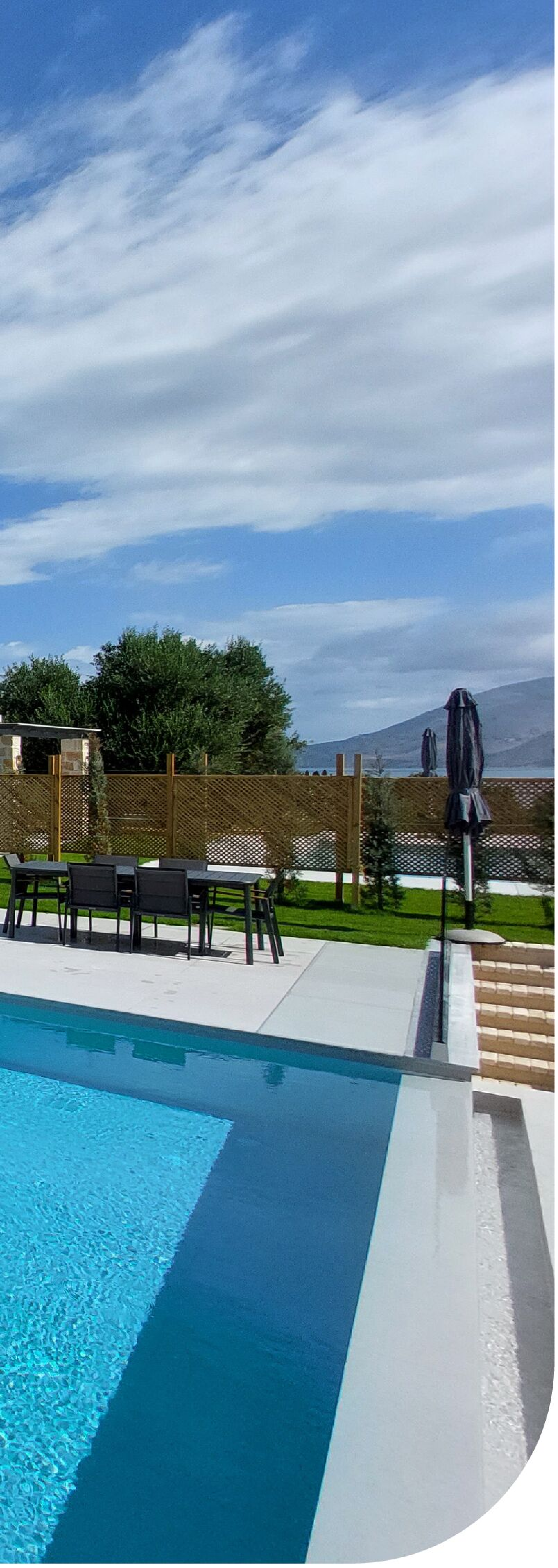
wrapped in flaky filo pastry, alongside cod with mashed potatoes and garlic.

I imagined sitting on the roof terrace in midsummer, watching diners spill out onto the street, the world coming alive as ferries dock and local children ride their bikes.

One day, I took an excursion with Kefalonia Sailing Point. The charismatic skipper Nikos Hionis was at one with his Kyma II 44 foot long yacht. He has a real mastery of his boat and knows the Ionian Sea like the back of his well-wrought hands. His trips offer up to six beds and seven to ten days aboard. You can go with him out from the gulf to Zante, to Lefkada, to Paxos and as far as Corfu within his May to October season. Accomplished, unobtrusive and humourous, Nikos is the ideal host to guide you on one of his lengthy trips. Indeed so versatile and capable is he that off-season he even makes his own honey and olive oil.

I went out across to the uninhabited Vardiani Island, nicknamed 'Rabbit Island', which looks just like a submarine from the distance. It's where an annual service is performed within a monastery and where a lighthouse is its only other building. Here I enjoyed a delicious 'spanakopita' spinach and feta pie prepared by his wife. Then on we went to the golden and fabulously long strand of Xi beach. To top off such a special outing, we spotted a school of dolphins leaping joyfully as they returned from the fish farms of Argostoli, dancing majestically in the sunset.

The beach Xi (pronounced 'Chsi') is named after the Greek letter whose shape it resembles. It's the perfect length for a decent ramble under cliffs of white cloying clay. The beautiful red sand changes to a spicy hue at dusk,



from ginger to cumin and cinnamon, while the sunsets add an extra layer of magic to the 'wine-dark sea' Homer described—perhaps with Kefalonia in mind!

TIPS

Among foreign visitors, the British are the most frequent returnees. They love Kefalonia and the island plays home to a healthy expat community of around 4000. They have Greek voting rights, which reflects the mutual respect dating back to the Victorian era when the island was held under a British protectorate. The locals assuredly tick all the boxes for the British tourists. They generally speak very good English. They're extremely honest, open-minded, intelligent, generous and unimposing. The airport has a considerable number of direct flights from Britain. The beaches are gloriously spotless, the whole island is very safe and thankfully there aren't any McDonalds or other fast-food outlets.

It's a testament to their authenticity and confidence in offering local produce.

The island is relatively inexpensive, is never full and doesn't have any queues or reason for lack of attentive service.

Even into October and November the heat of the sun is still penetrative and yet mercifully not sapping. This island has none of the partying venues that attends neighbouring Zakinthos, Napa in Cyprus or Faliraki in Rhodes.

By Adam Jacot De Boinod.

Sardinia! An Untamed Mediterranean Paradise

This island is truly exotic. It's an untamed outpost. A veritable swimming and sunbathing paradise of that refreshingly unsung glory one finds amongst the quieter regions of the Mediterranean.

This Costa Smeralda, this 'emerald coast', was promoted by the Aga Khan to develop into the 1960s playground of the famous and fashionable.

This 'endless island' relates to tourists with its gorgeous blue water, its granite cliffs shaped by wind and water erosion and its caves most numerous on earth (per square mile). It's in the middle of the Mediterranean and the 2nd largest island (after Sicily). Here the population is outnumbered by sheep 3:1. It coined the words sardine (where once they were abundant) and sardonic (meaning 'of Sardinia' and mentioned by Homer). The four moors depicted on the island's flag (as opposed to just one on Corsica's) are said to represent either the four Moorish princes defeated in battle or four historic Sardinian victories. Indeed, despite being invaded and exploited, the island was never conquered.

I arrived first at Golfo Aranci, a charming low-rise ex-fishing village with a backdrop of hills and with sea views stretching right across to small islands. I stayed at the charming Gabbiano Azzurro Hotel and Suites. (www.hotelgabbianoazzurro.com/en)

It's an independent 4-star hotel. It's elegant and refined and, despite what DH Lawrence says in his legendary 1921 novel 'Sea and Sardinia' things have changed and there's now a plethora of seagulls such that Gabbiano Azzurro has adopted the name 'blue seagull'.

There's something hearteningly authentic about family-owned hotels. Ones in which they also live. It gives the place real heart and it became a real home for me also with the

infectious warmth of the staff as they made a special effort with their small, delicate generosities of restaurant fleeces and beach bags. It's open during the April-October season and possesses mellow, yellow de Chirico-esque alcoves. Its bright, breezy lobby is adorned with nautical sculpture and ceramic artefacts. There's an inviting white piano, white sofas with traditional turquoise needlework and thriving banana plants.

The rooms are spacious, fresh and airy. They are tasteful and timeless: on-trend and uber-cool with their earthy colourings. All come with their own private balconies that look out over the sea or the village. They come with lovely sandstone bathrooms which offer the hotel's own-brand of myrtle-scented products famous for their healing properties. From my shutters and glass-screened veranda I witnessed both sunrise and sunset. Dawn was to bring its chorus of seagulls and thereupon an orchestra of activity developed as catamarans bobbed, fishing boats chugged and the tops of the yachts drifted.

Along an oleander, mimosa, myrtle and bougainvillea-scented walkway is the hotel's Blu Restaurant, where wooden fans rotate and clusters of wicker lampshades blow in the breeze. Here I enjoyed that famous Italian presentation and artistry: all from such basic ingredients. I looked out to sea and delighted in my branzino (sea bass) baked under salt, my julienned carrots and my Sa Fregula Nera, Sardinia's pasta dish which is similar to couscous and worked with the fingertips using water and salt.

I loved how on the hotel's sandy white private beach (very much the prime spot), a forest of tasselled parasols, tickled by the breeze, fluttered balletically like swans across their lake. For, with its shallowest and bluest of water, came the pleasing gradual wading to deeper water. Ideal for parents and their toddlers.

Across the gulf I arrived next to Cala Cuncheddi (https://vretreats.com/en/cala-cuncheddi/), a 4-star hotel that means 'shell cove. It was renovated in 2014 and is part of the Italian hotel collection called VRetreats. It's truly captivating with its panoramic views of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the legendary Tavarola. How wonderful it was to look across the expansive of the gulf that offered every shade

of blue before dusk fell. Indeed, looking back from the sea, this sandstone hotel resembled the artist Corot while the backdrop is pure Cezanne: immersed, as it is, among old olive trees in Mediterranean underbrush: scrub consisting of juniper, arbutus, cistus, lentisk and myrtle.

I relished my strolls past the hotel's signature grey and white parasols and the pomegranate trees and resident herons to the local beaches and bays. My head-to-toe spa treatment felt like floating on water and the rare yet effective belly massage definitely helped me unwind all the more. At this hotel some cycle, some trek, most guests spend their time bathing on Li Cuncheddi beach, set directly beneath the hotel, as it is perfect for swimming.

Cala Cuncheddi's outdoor pool has as its central feature a single olive tree giving it a very tranquil vibe. The wild-flower landscaping is gorgeous with its panoply of ferns, shrubs and foliage. Such tamed wilderness set amongst divine paving stones as this flourishing of native plants sweetened the air with their pungent scent. Everywhere is extremely well spaced with a rocking chair here, a sofa there.

The 79 rooms and 3 suites (starting from £211 / €250 / $270) possess patios and fetching Moorish verandas with their oak railings that embrace the curves of nature. Most come with a seaview and some overlook the garden. The rooms are simple yet stylish, which is an art in itself, and are decorated in calming neutral tones.

Of the hotel's three different restaurants I took my breakfast at Asarena (meaning 'to the sand') and enjoyed the confident dinner menus at both Asumari (meaning 'to the water') and Zinnibiri ('juniper'). The latter has a stunning setting with its six tables sitting beneath wicker lanterns and bamboo shelter. It all felt so wonderfully natural in the open air. So stylish and rustic.

In keeping with DH Lawrence I also relished my 6-day Sardinian journey and, as he said so correctly, "this land resembles no other place". For a paradise it always was and is: an island of real beauty, strong, wild, hard and forever mysterious.

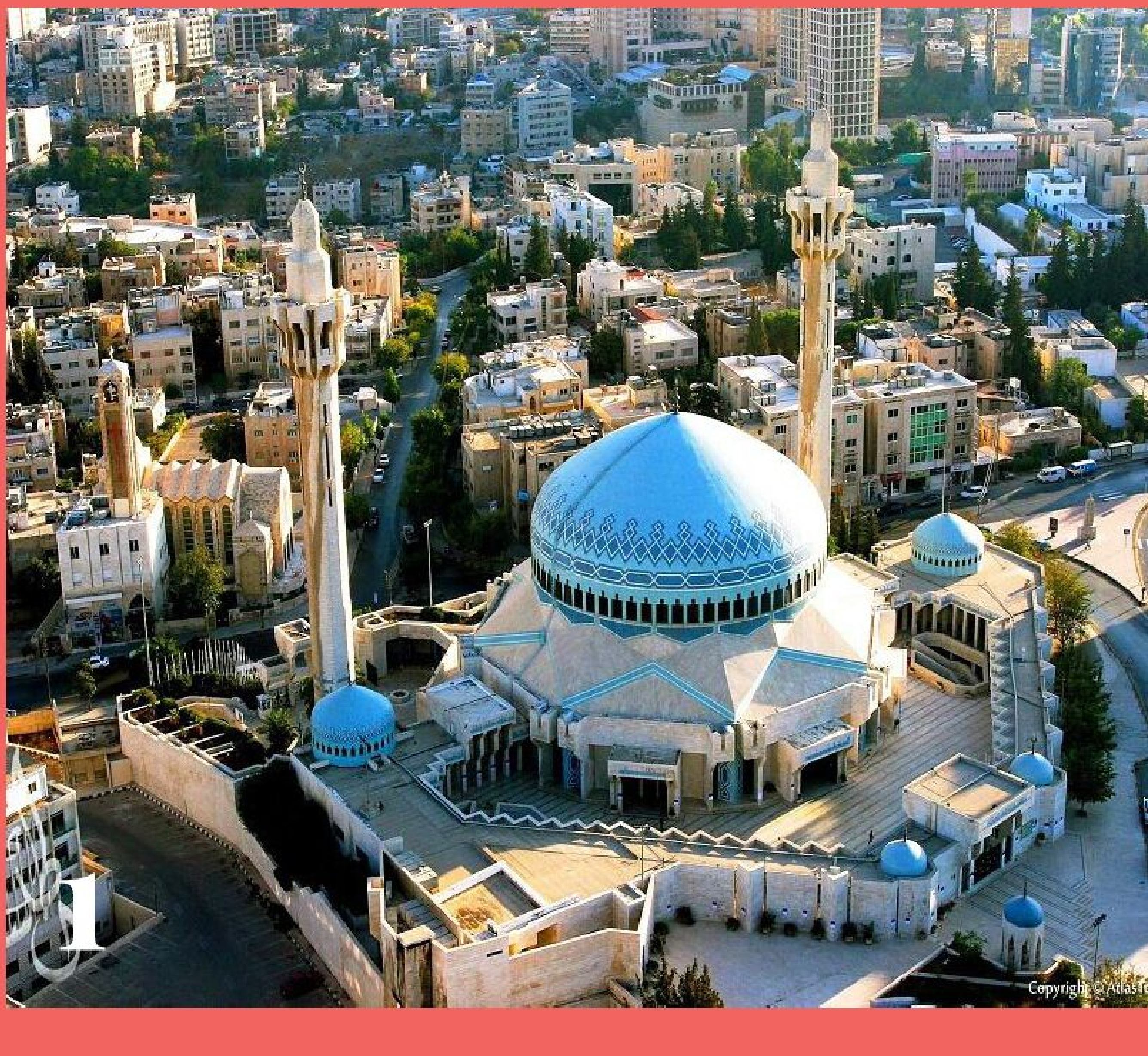
By Adam Jacot de Boinod

Fifteen Culturally Rich Destinations to Experience Ramadan

By Tahira Khan

From the heart of the Middle East to the serene landscapes of Europe and beyond, these 15 handpicked destinations offer a unique blend of cultural richness and spiritual tranquillity during Ramadan.

Whether you're drawn to the bustling city life of Amman or the historic beauty of Granada, each location presents an opportunity to experience Ramadan’s sacred traditions in its own distinctive way, while connecting with local customs and practices. Explore vibrant markets, communal Iftar feasts, and serene religious sites across the world to make this Ramadan unforgettable.



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Destination One: Amman, Jordan

The city of Amman effortlessly combines elements of tradition and modernity, creating a peaceful yet culturally rich atmosphere during the holy month of Ramadan. As the sun sets, the city springs to life with traditional iftar gatherings, bustling night markets, and evening taraweeh prayers in historical mosques like the King Abdullah I Mosque. The genuine warmth of Jordanian hospitality adds a special touch for travellers at this time of year. Visitors have the opportunity to partake in communal iftar meals hosted by mosques and charitable organisations, offering a unique insight into Jordanian Ramadan customs such as enjoying mansaf, tasting Arabic coffee, and indulging in traditional sweets like qatayef.

Additionally, there are sacred sites and important Islamic landmarks in close proximity to Amman, such as the Cave of the Seven Sleepers (Ashab al-Kahf) and the revered Al Buqaya tree. Travellers can easily access the city by flying into Queen Alia International Airport, which is well-served by major airlines. Getting around the city is convenient with the availability of local taxis and ride-hailing apps.

Destination Two: Bukhara/ Samarkand - Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is a land filled with an abundance of captivating sights, boasting a rich ancient history that traces back to the days of the Silk Road. The country showcases a diverse range of natural wonders, from majestic mountains to vast deserts and picturesque landscapes. Samarkand and Bukhara are two of the most renowned Silk Road cities in Central Asia, known for their exquisite beauty. During the holy month of Ramadan, these cities come alive with special Iftar events and lavish feasts, setting a remarkable scene unlike any other in the region. The historic mosques, madrasahs, and caravanserai in these cities serve as gathering spots for the community, where people come together in large groups to break their fast and partake in joyful celebrations. The backdrop of these events is truly awe-inspiring and steeped in tradition that has stood the test of time.

In addition to the sense of camaraderie and stunning settings, visitors will have the opportunity to indulge in delectable Uzbek dishes such as plov, somsa, and juicy kebabs - all expertly prepared in massive cooking vessels. Beyond the Iftar festivities, both Samarkand and Bukhara offer a plethora of captivating attractions to explore during the day,

Destination Three: Shiraz - Iran

Shiraz, the cultural hub of Iran, provides a captivating experience during Ramadan with its fascinating ancient history and deep Islamic roots. Along with the chance to visit remarkable sites for prayer like the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque, the city also offers serene spots for relaxation such as spacious parks and stunning gardens. Renowned as the City of Poets, Shiraz teems with cultural life, offering a vibrant atmosphere during Ramadan.

Visitors can partake in vibrant community Iftar gatherings, such as those held at Vakil Bazaar, and savour delectable Persian dishes. Encompassing a rich Islamic heritage, historic landmarks, delectable cuisine, and peaceful surroundings, Shiraz promises an immersive experience unlike any other.

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Destination Four: Grenada, Spain

Home to the Alhambra, Granada celebrates its Islamic heritage with quiet reflection and scenic beauty. For a remarkable Ramadan destination, the Alhambra Palace Hotel in Granada, Spain offers a one-of-a-kind blend of history, luxury, and serenity. Perched atop a hill overlooking the city, this historic hotel immerses guests in the charm of Nasrid-inspired architecture while providing modern comforts. Surrounded by the tranquil Alhambra Forest, it's a place for reflection, with Andalusian cuisine crafted from locally grown ingredients. Guests can also explore the city's rich Islamic heritage, including the Alhambra fortress itself.

Destination Five: Dubai

A Vibrant Ramadan atmosphere where the city comes alive with Ramadan tents, traditional Iftars, and cultural performances. Visitors can experience Emirati customs at heritage sites like Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood and attend special Ramadan activities at the Jumeirah Mosque. Dubai offers a cosmopolitan twist to Ramadan with its luxury dining, shopping festivals, and serene desert retreats for quiet reflection.

Located in the heart of the city, the Media One Hotel offers a vibrant mix of modern hospitality and Ramadan traditions. Guests can enjoy curated Iftar experiences, explore Dubai's Ramadan Night Market, and visit nearby cultural landmarks like the Jumeirah Mosque. The accessibility and diverse offerings make it perfect for a meaningful and memorable stay. The city is quieter during the day, especially in the afternoons, although all major attractions, malls and restaurants are open as normal. At sunset, ceremonial cannons are fired across Dubai, including near Burj Khalifa and City Walk, to announce the end of the day's fast. On the sound of the cannon, the city springs to life and people start iftar, with many going to elaborately decorated tents and restaurants for sociable meals. After iftar the city gets very busy, with malls and shopping districts buzzing with energy until late into the night.

Destination Six: Maldives

For tranquillity seekers, the Maldives offers pristine beaches and unmatched serenity. A handful of pristine island resorts remain alcohol- free so this allows travellers to enjoy the idyllic experience while focusing on what matters most. The Barefoot Eco Hotel on a local island is a fantastic alcohol-free retreat. You can take part in the island's environmental and cultural guided tour which concludes with tea in a local Maldivian village. Meanwhile celebrating the end of Ramadan and eid at the private resorts of Milaidhoo and Baros provide an idyllic setting for families and friends to come together and mark this special occasion.

Baros will provide activities such as Fenkulhi, a Maldivian tradition connecting guests through games. Delving into an eid feast complete with international cuisines,and enjoying a Maldivian dessert-making workshop learning the craft of traditional desserts whilst enjoying irresistible flavours. Participating in a fishing competition and learning the art of Maldivian handline fishing. Whilst Milaidhoo will get you swimming with the sea turtles, taking part in the Maali and Bodu Mas Show to watch Maldivian Folklore brought to life.

Destination Seven: Lahore/ Islamabad - Pakistan

Majestic mountains in the northern region, dynamic urban centres, a stunning Arabian Sea shoreline, and a plethora of captivating historic sites. Specifically, there are bustling centres of festivities during the holy month of Ramadan in these cities. Lahore is renowned for its extravagant Iftar gatherings, featuring lavish spreads of culinary delights in public areas such as Food Street on Gawalmandi, Liberty Market, and Mall Road. These grand celebrations include lavish public buffets, lively markets lit up with lights, and background music creating a festive atmosphere. The Iftar feasts held in Lahore are globally recognised during the daytime in Lahore, visitors can explore numerous beautiful historic landmarks within a compact, walkable area. Islamabad also provides a delightful ambiance for experiencing Ramadan, with elaborate Iftar gatherings taking place across the city.

The iconic Faisal Mosque, one of the largest in the world, and its surrounding green spaces host generous Iftar meals in a serene environment conducive to prayer. In the daytime, the tranquil city parks in Islamabad are ideal spots for relaxation and immersion in nature, while the nearby Margalla hills offer opportunities for wildlife spotting just a short distance from the bustling city centre.

Destination Eight: Kuala Lumpur/ Malaysia

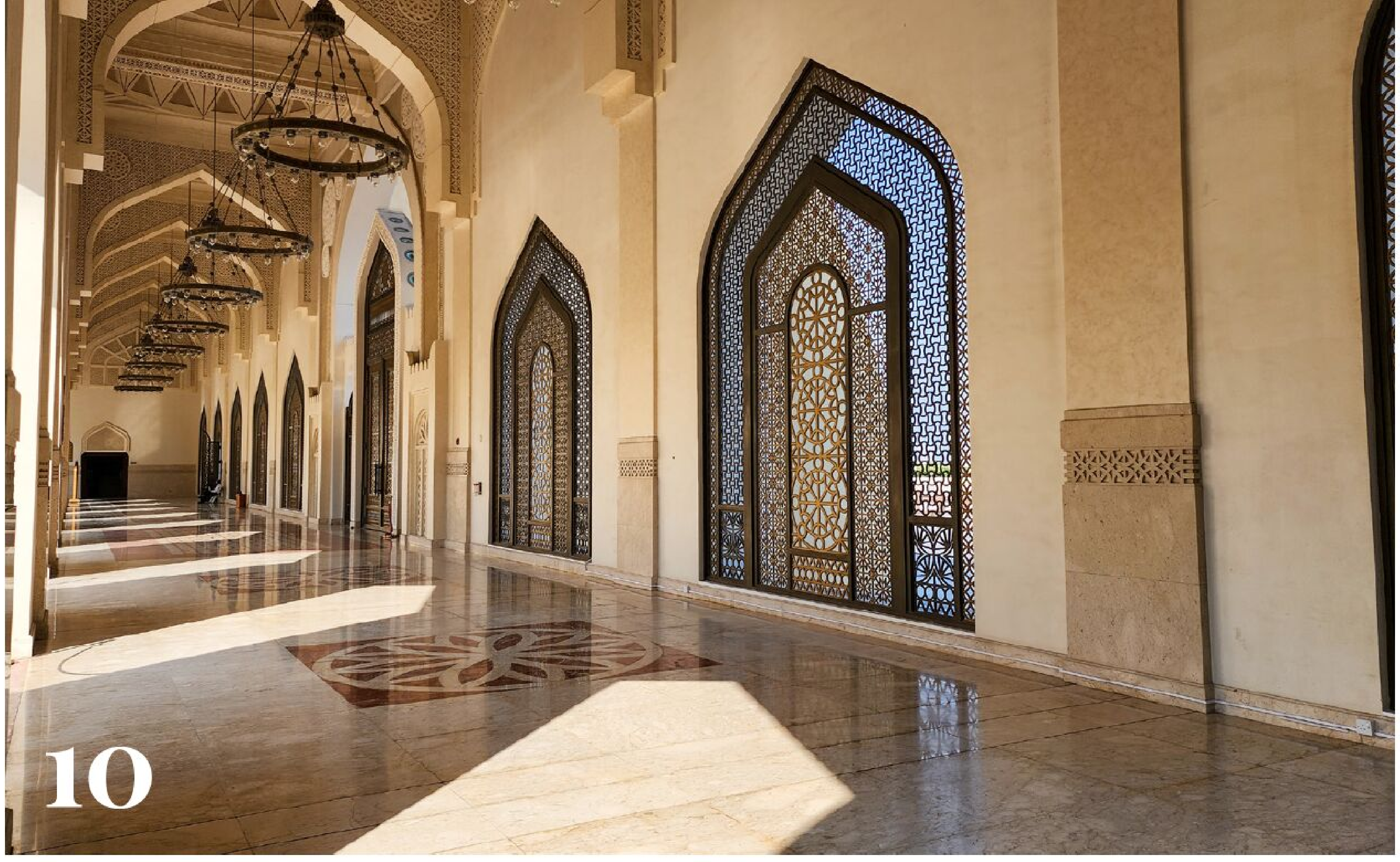
Kuala Lumpur is a vibrant city that blends modern skyscrapers with ancient temples, showcasing a unique cultural heritage. The capital of Malaysia is known for its alcohol-free environment, making it a perfect destination for Muslim travellers.

One of the must-visit places in Kuala Lumpur is the Pan Pacific Serviced Suites, a luxurious high-rise accommodation that offers convenient access to the city's top attractions. Instead of experiencing the nightlife, visitors can indulge in the diverse street food at Jalan Alor or explore the stunning Batu Caves for a spiritual experience and breath-taking views.

Destination Nine: Al Aula – North West Saudi Arabia

Located in the North West of Saudi Arabia, AlUla is a place of extraordinary human and natural heritage that holds over 200,000 years of largely unexplored human history. AlUla holds a series of fascinating historical and archaeological sites including Ancient Dadan, as well as offering some of the most awe-inspiring events and activities. the spiritual essence of Ramadan in AlUla, where traditional open-air Iftars, local folklore, and cultural activities bring people together. The serene desert landscape enhances this reflective time, culminating in joyous Eid celebrations that highlight the beauty of community and togetherness.

The Heart of the Oasis restaurant is located in the shadows of AlUla's authentic date palm trees and nestled in the mud-brick dwellings. The restaurant is a regenerative experience that bridges the connection between the mind and body. The dining space features fire lamps and a large open kitchen for a comfortable atmosphere. Guests can enjoy a fusion menu. You can also try camping experience by staying at the Pangea camp site, as well as a desert safari in Sharaan Nature Reserve. A unique experience to try is hot air ballooning which takes place all year-round offering a unique perspective of the destination's majesty at sunrise or sunset. Qatar Airways has direct services from Doha into AlUla. Flydubai has also weekly flights from Dubai to Al Ula.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Destination Ten: Salalah /Muscat - Oman

Muscat being the capital city of Oman is known for its traditional architecture and cultural heritage. During the holy month of Ramadan, the city becomes peaceful as most of the restaurants are closed. This is a great time to explore the cultural and historical sites in and around Muscat. Omani people are famous for their warm hospitality, so do not be surprised if you are invited to their homes for Iftar. In Oman, it is a custom for the Misaharati, also known as night walkers, to roam the streets with lamps and drums to wake people up for Suhoor. The Sultan Qaboos Mosque stands as the largest and most magnificent mosque in Oman, boasting beautifully manicured gardens, fountains, and elegant walkways.

Salalah is a picturesque destination that offers a mix of stunning landscapes, including majestic mountains, cascading waterfalls, pristine beaches, and lush oases. The area is rich in history, with ancient ruins and archaeological sites like Al-Baleed and Sumhuram providing a glimpse into its fascinating past. This combination of natural beauty and cultural heritage makes Salalah a perfect destination for travellers seeking diverse and enriching experiences. Souly Eco Lodge provides eco-friendly accommodations with breath-taking views. Visitors can enjoy a hike at Wadi Darbat, where waterfalls and lush greenery offer a peaceful and adventurous experience.

Destination Eleven: Sarajevo, Bosnia

Sarajevo may not be at the forefront of your mind when considering places to celebrate Ramadan, but it has a unique charm during this sacred month. The streets are adorned with banners that read “Ramazan Mubarak,” and eateries offer special Iftar menus to mark the occasion. The Sarajevo Ramadan Festival is an annual affair that showcases various activities throughout the city, all in an effort to promote peace during Ramadan. The highlight of the festivities is held at the Yellow Bastian, an Ottoman fortress that provides a picturesque setting for open-air Iftar gatherings each evening.

The Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque stands out as the largest historical mosque in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notably, it was the first mosque in the world to utilise electric lighting back in 1898, during the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Destination Twelve: Northern Sweden Gothenburg

The breath-taking natural beauty of Sweden, particularly in the northern regions and Swedish Lapland, offers a unique and spiritual experience during Ramadan. The opportunity to witness the magnificent Northern Lights adds a special touch to the connection with nature. In Swedish Lapland, one can capture the magic of the aurora borealis through a photo tour with Lights of Lapland and explore the stunning Abisko National Park.

For festive celebrations, especially Eid, Gothenburg is the ideal destination. As home to Scandinavia's largest amusement park, Liseberg, the city offers a vibrant atmosphere with its beautiful architecture, friendly locals, and diverse attractions. It is the perfect place to enjoy the biggest highlights of the year. Popular activities in Gothenburg include a boat trip along the iconic Göta Canal. Ideally you could spend the last week of Ramadan here and then head to Gothenburg for Eid. Travellers can easily reach Swedish Lapland by flying with SAS from London Heathrow to Kiruna, with a layover in Stockholm.

Destination Thirteen: Cairo- Egypt

The period of Ramadan presents a wonderful opportunity to explore the captivating city of Cairo, which comes alive with a joyous and vibrant atmosphere. The streets are adorned with twinkling decorative lights, intricately handcrafted lanterns hanging from doorways, and colourful canopies stretching across rows of tables and chairs throughout the city. The traditional Ramadan lantern known as the fanous, originating from the Fatimid conquest, adds to the festive ambiance. Each evening, the start of Iftar is signalled by a ceremonial cannon firing from the Citadel of Salah el-Din at sunset, marking the time for breaking the fast.

While daytime in Cairo offers the chance to see the city's landmarks and attractions, sunset is when locals gather at their chosen spots to begin their evening meal. To fully immerse in the Ramadan experience in Cairo, visit the Egyptian tents of Ramadan Suhoor (Kheyam) for a taste of authentic cuisine and fruity cocktails. The Al-Azhar Mosque, established in 970 AD, has evolved over the course of its 1,000-year history through numerous expansions, seamlessly blending various architectural styles. This iconic mosque stands as a testament to Cairo's rich cultural heritage and historic significance.

Destination Fourteen: Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul annually embraces the holy month of Ramadan with immense excitement. It offers a spiritual ambiance that highlights values like sharing, love, and tolerance. This transcontinental metropolis becomes even more radiant during Ramadan with its dazzling mosques, vibrant festivities, and a range of religious activities. Public Iftars are a common sight in Istanbul, where locals gather in parks, squares, and mosque courtyards to partake in meals hosted by local authorities and charitable organisations.

The mosques in Istanbul are adorned with special illuminations during Ramadan, with lights strung between the minarets bearing welcoming messages like ‘Hoşgeldin Ramazan’ or ‘Ya Şehr-i Ramazan’ (Welcome Ramadan). One of the most renowned mosques in Istanbul is the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, originally constructed as a Greek Orthodox Church in the 13th century before being transformed into a mosque in 1453. After serving as a museum from 1935 onwards, it was converted back into a mosque in July 2020.

Destination: Al Aqsa Mosque- Jerusalem

Experience a unique opportunity to stay and visit sacred places this year. Spend six nights at the revered Al Aqsa Mosque, where you can partake in complete suhoor, Jummah, and taraweeh prayers while staying at the luxurious Hashimi Hotel. Immerse yourself in a tour of Al Aqsa Mosque and other historic and religious sites organized by Blessed Voyage UK travel and tours. Please keep in mind any political sensitivities and contact the service provider for more information.

Credit: Tahira Khan/Pexels/IStock/DMT

George Sale's Landmark Translation of the Qur'an – The First English Qur'an

In 1734, George Sale's translation of the Qur'an into English marked a pivotal moment in the West's understanding of Islam. Though influenced by the biases of its time, this groundbreaking work helped introduce Islamic thought to European audiences and laid the foundation for future scholarly exploration of the religion.

The first English translation of the Qur'an, published in 1734, marked a significant moment in Islamic history. This groundbreaking translation, completed by George Sale, opened a new door for English-speaking readers to explore Islam. It was the first translation to present the Qur'an in a clear and methodical manner to Western audiences, helping bridge the gap between Eastern and Western understandings of Islam.

George Sale (1697–1736) was an English lawyer, scholar, and linguist, best known for his pioneering translation of the Qur'an into English. At a time when much of Europe had little understanding of Islam, Sale had studied several languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, which made him well-equipped for the task. His linguistic expertise, combined with his intellectual curiosity, made him a suitable candidate to undertake this monumental project.

Sale's translation, titled The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed, was completed in 1734. Though it took a few years to gain widespread attention, it quickly became popular and was praised for its scholarly approach. The translation was accompanied by an introduction and detailed footnotes that provided historical context and explanations of key Islamic teachings, making the Qur'an more accessible to European readers.

"Sale's translation was a significant achievement," says Dr. Jane Smith, an expert in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. "It introduced many Europeans to the Qur'an in a systematic and readable form, though it still reflected some of the biases of its time."

Sale's translation was instrumental in making the Qur'an accessible to a broad audience. Prior to this, many translations of the Qur'an were either inaccurate or influenced by religious biases. Sale sought to provide a more accurate and scholarly rendition, aiming to help Western readers better understand Islam. He explained Islamic concepts that were unfamiliar to Europeans, making the text easier to interpret.

However, his translation was not without limitations. Although Sale had studied Arabic, he was not a native speaker, which sometimes led to imprecise interpretations. Additionally, the political and religious context of 18th-century Europe shaped how Sale viewed Islam. During this period, many Europeans had a negative perception of Islam, influenced by past conflicts with Muslim empires.

"Sale's translation was undoubtedly shaped by the cultural attitudes of his time," notes Dr. Andrew Rippin, a professor of Islamic history. "While he strived for accuracy, the views he held were inevitably influenced by Western biases."

Despite these shortcomings, Sale's translation gained widespread popularity and played a pivotal role in introducing Islam to European intellectual circles. It became an important reference for scholars, thinkers, and

educators, paving the way for future studies of Islamic thought and theology in the West.

Sale's translation was published during a time when the Ottoman Empire was at its height, and the Islamic world held great influence. Despite this, much of Europe remained largely uninformed about Islam and often viewed it with suspicion, especially due to past military and political conflicts with Muslim empires. Sale's translation emerged at a moment when Europeans were beginning to show more interest in the Islamic world and its culture.

"Europe in the 17th century had a complicated view of Islam," explains Dr. Hamid Dabashi, a professor at Columbia University. "While some admired the accomplishments of Islamic culture, many still saw Islam as a threat. Sale's translation reflects this tension."

At the same time, the Islamic world was a centre of intellectual and cultural achievement, with Muslim scholars making significant contributions to science, philosophy, and the arts. However, much of this knowledge was not well known in Europe. Sale's translation played a role in introducing some of these ideas to Western audiences, highlighting the intellectual richness of the Islamic tradition.

A Lasting Influence

Sale's translation laid the groundwork for future English-language translations of the Qur'an. While modern translations are generally more accurate, Sale's work remains a significant milestone in the history of Western engagement with Islam. It helped spark a deeper interest in Islamic thought and contributed to a broader understanding of Islamic culture and religion in the West.

"Sale's work opened the door for more serious and nuanced studies of Islam," says Dr. Dabashi. "It made the Qur'an accessible to a wider audience and fostered a dialogue between the Islamic world and the West."

Although Sale's translation had its limitations, it had a profound and lasting impact. It influenced prominent European thinkers like Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson, who referred to Sale's translation in their own intellectual works. It also sparked debates about religion and the role of faith in society, shaping how Islam was perceived and studied in Europe.

Today, scholars continue to translate the Qur'an into various languages, making it more accessible to people worldwide. While modern translations have improved upon Sale's work, his translation remains an important historical reference, laying the foundation for the study of Islam in the West.

George Sale's translation of the Qur'an in 1734 was a crucial milestone in the Western understanding of Islam. It provided English-speaking readers with their first comprehensive and methodical look at the Qur'an, though it was inevitably shaped by the cultural and religious biases of its time. Despite these imperfections, Sale's work played a key role in shaping the way Islam was viewed in Europe, opening the door for continued dialogue and scholarship between the Islamic world and the West.

To enter this highest level of paradise, one must worship Allah alone...

Ramadan Inspiration:

The Seven Levels of Paradise

When we talk about travelling the world, or when we come back from the ultimate beach holiday, we describe it like ‘it felt like paradise’ but have we actually seen paradise, do we even wonder what it will be like?

Okay, so my confessions are coming out now. As a child, I was an avid day- dreamer, I would switch off and sometimes even fall asleep during school lessons. I would stare up into the sky and observe the moon and stars daydreaming. I knew there was something more above the skies and heavens.

During my frequent travels, when the aeroplane used to ascend into the first sky, I secretly wished the pilot would take it into the second, third, fourth and the seventh sky and `I could only see Allah sitting on his throne on the seventh level with white light and angels around him and him waiting to meet me with a huge smile. But then end up being disappointed when we didn’t go beyond the second sky. When I see a rocket going into space, I start to envy Neil Armstrong, why him and not me. I knew I was searching for something more, something that cannot be understood or defined. I would wake up from vivid dreams and visions of being surrounded by glistening and warm turquoise waters. I would dream of walking on the sea often leading off a wooden bridge in the middle of this calming beautiful sea. Often this led me into a state of deep reflection and longing to find this place on the earth one day. Is it in the Maldives? is it in Mauritius? or is it in Mexico on a white sandy beach? I wonder and I want to write it on my bucket list. But then one day it occurs that maybe that place doesn’t exist on this earth and I wonder if it was paradise I saw in my visions? How do I plan to get to this destination, which I keep seeing?

We have heard of the significance of the number seven in our religion. From the seven heavens, to the seven tawafs around the Kaaba. There are also seven levels of hellfire, but lastly the seven levels of paradise or Jannah as we call , the afterlife where each person will be ranked according to their piety, righteousness and good deeds. In this world we are surrounded by so much fear and negativity, especially after so many plane crashes, the upsetting wars across the world and in Gaza. But as a collective, we all need a dose of positivity and peace to keep the spirit of Ramadan alive as we enter into it in 2025.

So we start off with the highest level of paradise or Jannah, I can’t even describe or compare anything to it. Taken from the most authentic sources it is said that ‘Jannat Al Firdaus’ is the most supreme level.

The Highest Level - Jannat al-Firdaus

This is the highest and most prestigious level of paradise. It is reserved for the most righteous and pious individuals and the closest level to the throne of Allah SWT. It is beyond the comprehension to our minds. As quoted by Omer Suleiman in his Ramadan video series “ Believers should always strive for the highest level and aim to be the closest to the Prophet PBUH.”

The highest part of Jannah is called ‘Al Waseela’ which is reserved just for our Prophet PBUH who will be placed the closest to Allah’s throne. There are many verses and hadith about the characteristic and qualities of a person that will be allowed to enter Jannah such as “ Those who do good

deeds, whether male or female, and believe in Allah, will enter Paradise without any injustice done to them, not even as much as the speck on a date seed." (Surah Nisa, verse 124). Surah Rahman also speaks about paradise and Jannah. To enter this highest level of paradise, one must worship Allah alone, offer prayers diligently, give charity, and maintain good relations with people, family and relatives. Seeking knowledge is highly rewarded in Islam, as the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whoever seeks knowledge, Allah will make the path to Paradise easy for him" (At-Tirmidhi).Visiting the sick for the sake of pleasing Allah is a noble deed, as the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned that the one who visits a sick person or a fellow believer will be blessed with happiness, blessings in their journey, and a high status in Paradise (At-Tirmidhi). Believers who reach this level are rewarded with eternal bliss and the opportunity to be in the presence of Allah and his chosen ones. May we all strive to attain this highest level of paradise.

The Second Level – Darussalam

This is a place of peace and tranquillity and here, the believers will be surrounded by beauty and serenity. The scenery here is breath-taking, with lush landscapes and crystal-clear rivers flowing gently. Birds chirp melodiously in the background, adding to the serene atmosphere of this level. Flowers of every colour imaginable bloom in abundance, filling the air with their sweet fragrance. In Darussalam, there is a sense of peace and harmony that envelops you as soon as you arrive. The inhabitants of this level are friendly and welcoming, always ready to lend a helping hand. The architecture here is stunning, with buildings made of shimmering marble and adorned with intricate designs. The streets are lined with trees that provide shade from the gentle sun, creating a cool and pleasant environment. Nature is revered and celebrated in all its glory. The rivers here are teeming with life, with fish of all shapes and sizes swimming gracefully beneath the surface. Butterflies flit from flower to flower, their delicate wings shimmering in the sunlight. Majestic trees stand tall, their leaves rustling gently in the breeze, creating a symphony of sound. As we explore this level, we are filled with a sense of awe and wonder at the wonders of nature. It is a place where peace and harmony abound, and where the beauty of the natural world is celebrated in all its glory.

The Third Level - Al-Naeem

This level is filled with delights beyond imagination. Level three of Al Naeem in jannah is a paradise unlike any other, filled with beauty that exceeds imagination. This heavenly realm is reserved for those who have lived righteous lives and have embraced Islam. The gardens are filled with lush greenery and exotic flowers, creating a serene atmosphere and the rivers flow with crystal-clear water, inviting its inhabitants to relax and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. Those who reach level three of Jannah will be rewarded with everlasting bliss. They will be greeted by smiling faces and warm embraces from their loved ones and the angels will shower them with gifts and blessings, making them feel truly special and cherished. They will be surrounded by an abundance of delicious food and drinks, satisfying their every craving. They will never feel sadness or pain, only joy and contentment.

The Fourth Level- Al-Khuld

Here, time has no meaning, and individuals will live forever in joy. The gardens are filled with lush greenery and beautiful flowers. Rivers of pure water flow through the paradise, descending from the highest realm of Jannah, providing nourishment and joy to its residents. The water is crystal clear and tastes sweeter than honey. The fruit trees bear fruits of all kinds, and their branches bow down to offer their bounty to the believers. The residents of ‘Al Khuld’ are adorned in garments of pure silk and gold. They are served by beautiful servants who cater to their every need and the believers are surrounded by loved ones and friends. They will share in the joy of each other's company. Believers will be granted eternal youth and beauty and they will be free from any pain or suffering., they will be protected from the torment of the hellfire.

The Fifth Level - Al-Ma'wa

A place of refuge and comfort. Believers will find solace and contentment in this level. Those who reach ‘Al Mawa’ are rewarded with the company of righteous companions. They are also granted the opportunity to converse with the prophets and angels. The believers in this level are given beautiful garments and exquisite jewellery. They are served delicious fruits and drinks by beautiful and obedient servants. The inhabitants will engage in various activities to enjoy their eternal bliss and they will participate in joyful conversations and intellectual discussions. They will also engage in sports and other physical activities to maintain their health and vitality. They will spend time in prayer and worship, seeking to draw closer to Allah. Al Mawa level four in Jannah is a place of unimaginable beauty and joy.

The Sixth Level - Al-Adan

A garden of everlasting bliss and here, believers will find peace and contentment for eternity. It is reserved for those who have exhibited exceptional faith and good deeds. The level is adorned with rivers of pure honey and milk and the inhabitants are surrounded by lush gardens and fragrant flowers, the air is filled with the melodious sounds of birds chirping. The residents engage in constant worship and remembrance of Allah, they partake in feasts with delicious and exotic fruits. They enjoy the company of loved ones and fellow believers. Those in al Adan Level Five are granted eternal youth and beauty. They will be free from any pain, suffering, or sorrow and they will have direct access to Allah and His blessings.

The Seventh and Lowest Level of Jannah - Al-Maqam

This is the resting place of the believers. This level is the culmination of all the levels of paradise, where believers will find ultimate peace and tranquillity. The individual who resides in the lowest tier of Paradise will gradually progress until they reach the grand palace that awaits them in the higher levels. This magnificent structure will be constructed entirely of gleaming pearl, from its roofs to its doors, locks, and keys. As they enter, they will find themselves surrounded by the shimmering walls of a hollow pearl. The palace will be oriented towards a splendid green jewel with a striking red border, containing seventy ornate doors. Behind each door lies another dazzling green jewel, each with its own unique inner lining. Beyond each jewel lies yet another, each adorned with a different hue, creating a breath-taking display of radiant beauty.

Re-uniting with Family and Friends in Jannah

As Omer Suleiman said you won’t be able to reach Jannah if you don’t treat your family in the way which Allah is pleased with. He also said that even if the deeds of the parents and children do not measure up or if or if one is lower than the other than Allah will reunite them out of his mercy. So it’s really important to check in with ourselves and our relationships with family members during this time. The levels of Jannah paradise offer believers a glimpse of the rewards that await them in the afterlife. Each level is more beautiful and more rewarding than the last, serving as a reminder of the infinite mercy and blessings of Allah SWT. He also mentions that you will be reunited with your grandparents or ancestors that passed before you met them. Your good and pious friends will pull you with their hand into paradise with them and you will also see your oppressors, or people that intentionally hurt you or friends that tried to lead you astray or towards sin causing the wrath of Allah swt through a peephole in hell.

This is why it is so important to surround yourself with friends that bring you towards righteousness.

Credit: Tahira Khan - Pixabay

images: Orbis

Anwara, age 55, receiving an eye examination at a Woman-Led Green Vision Centre in Chandpur, Bangladesh

Lighting the Way for Women and Girls in Rural Bangladesh

Advertorial

How Orbis's female-led initiatives are helping to tackle avoidable blindness

In a small village in rural Chandpur, Bangladesh, 55-year-old Anwara has been battling severe vision loss for many months. Her eyes, itchy, red and swollen, have started to water, making it increasingly difficult to carry out daily tasks. Unable to see from her left eye, Anwara is forced to rely on others for help navigating everyday life.

Unaware there is treatment available to her, and unable to travel the long distance to the nearest hospital, Anwara resorts to taking medicine without a doctor's advice, hoping it will relieve her discomfort. Sadly, it only makes the condition worse.

Elsewhere in Chandpur, 11-year-old Mahfuza struggles to keep up with school, unable to see words and numbers on the board to answer her teacher's questions. Her classmates' laughter at her struggles leave her feeling isolated. Her parents don't know what's wrong or how to help their daughter.

Anwara and Mahfuza are sadly not alone. Today, 1.1 billion people are living with some form of vision loss. Yet 90% is avoidable with most cases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. And if that isn't shocking enough, being female also puts Anwara and Mahfuza at an even greater disadvantage. Worldwide, 112 million more women than men are blind or visually impaired. In Bangladesh alone, over half of the 27 million people with vision loss, are women and girls.

Breaking Down Barriers

International eye care charity Orbis believe everyone deserves access to the quality eye care they need to thrive, regardless of gender or where they live. Together with their network of partners, they are working hard to break down the barriers some people face in accessing healthcare and increase eye care services in communities that need it most.

Sight loss affects more women and girls for several reasons. In areas where there is limited help available, lower literacy rates limit access to crucial medical information. Healthcare for men and boys is often also prioritised at

Anwara, age 55, at her home in Chandpur village, Bangladesh

Mahfuza, age 11, receiving an eye examination at a Women-Led Green Vision Centre in Chandpur, Bangladesh

Mahfuza, age 11, following a successful cataract operation in Chandpur, Bangladesh

the expense of women and girls. Women also tend to live longer than men, increasing their risk of developing vision problems later in life. Furthermore, in some cultures there can be a preference for women to see female healthcare providers, yet a shortage of female eye care professionals prevents women accessing treatment. Globally, women represent only 25-30% of ophthalmologists and 25-45% of eye care professionals in training.

In Bangladesh, Orbis have set-up eight unique vision centres, run and managed by women. These are established in rural, hard-to-reach locations, allowing local people access to affordable, good quality eye care, without having to travel long distances. Nurun Nahar Aktar, a mid-level ophthalmic practitioner at one of the Orbis vision centres, says: “If these centres had not been established, so many people would have been deprived of eye care. In this area, there are hardly any medical centres, and medical centres for women and girls are almost non-existent.”

Here, female frontline healthcare workers carry out eye screenings, spectacle distribution, teleconsultation, referrals and follow-ups. The centres are subsidised for those unable to afford care, ensuring women and girls without access to financial resources can still receive treatment for free or at a reduced cost. This female-led model not only enhances comfort but also empowers women to seek care for themselves and their families without the need for a male chaperone. And as women often bring their husbands and children with them, more men and boys have their eyes tested and receive treatment as a result if needed - care they might not have sought out otherwise.

A Brighter Future

Back in Chandpur, Anwara’s situation is worsening fast, and she’s at risk of losing her sight. Thankfully, she has now heard about the women-led services available at a vision centre near her.

Anwara says: “After a thorough examination, the doctor said it was a cataract case and it required undergoing surgery. The doctor who tested my eyes was a woman. So, I didn’t feel shy and was able to express myself to the fullest.”

Mahfuza’s mother, Hawa, also hears about the vision centre from one of her relatives and doesn’t hesitate to take her daughter. It’s here that Mahfuza is also diagnosed with cataracts.

Hawa describes why the vision centre makes a difference: “Speaking to a female doctor at the hospital made me a lot more comfortable with discussing my daughter’s eye problems. The running of the vision centre by a woman has made a lot of difference. Any female can visit the centre without being accompanied by a male for the treatment of her own or her children.”

Both Anwara and Mahfuza were able to receive successful surgery at their nearest hospital.

“After the operation, a test was conducted and the doctors confirmed that my eyes were functioning properly,” Anwara explains. “Then they removed the eye patch, and I could see the world as normal for the first time in several months! I could witness the beauty of nature again and my heart filled with joy. After my left eye had developed cataract, I forgot all about this joy and the beauty nature boasts.”

Mahfuza, now able to see clearly, is eager to get back to school: “I am seeing everything more clearly now after a long period. I am feeling so happy that I will be able to return to my studies.”

Expanding Accessible Eye Care Services in Bangladesh

From January to June this year, over 17,000 patients had their eyes tested through these vision centres and door-to-door programmes, of which 56% were women and girls. Around 2,000 people also received glasses and over 5,000 were given medicine for vision related issues.

Tasmia, who leads one of the vision centres in Chandpur, shares how her faith is a key motivator for her: “My faith, Islam, teaches us to always help the ones in need with whatever we have. Because of my faith, I came into the medical profession so I could help people in need. Our faith is all about being a good human being and helping others as if they are family.”

Looking ahead, Orbis plans to expand its impact even further. Over the next two years, the charity aims to set up an additional five Women-Led Green Vision Centres across Bangladesh, helping to reach an additional 1.5 million people. This project shows Orbis's dedication to safeguarding the sight of women and girls for generations to come, helping them to stay in school, achieve economic independence, and take care of their families, so they can live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

For more information and to support Orbis’s life changing work, visit: www.orbis.org.uk/sight

No child should go needlessly blind

Right now thousands of children are at risk of going blind in Bangladesh.

In Cox's Bazar Refugee Camp and in areas where eye treatment is hard to access, children like Rafes could be left blind for life. Today nearly 1 million people are blind in Bangladesh, often trapping them in a lifetime of poverty.

Yet blinding conditions like cataracts are simple to treat, with surgery taking as little as 20 minutes. A life-changing surgery can help a child see their parents' faces for the first time, start school, and fulfil their dreams.

Your support can help bring the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital to Bangladesh to provide treatment and train doctors and nurses. You can help restore essential eye care services damaged by fire during recent unrest in Bangladesh.

Where children around the world face a lifetime of blindness, you can create a brighter future.

A generous donor has pledged to double every gift before 31 October 2024, meaning your donation to Orbis will go twice as far.

Please help us provide sight saving care to children in Bangladesh and families around the world.

Give the gift of sight today at **orbis.org.uk/sight**
by calling **020 7608 7269** or, by scanning here

For over 40 years, Orbis has helped to protect the sight of millions of people around the world.

We've provided screenings and treatment for millions of people who couldn't otherwise afford eye care. And because we train local eye care workers too, our supporters help create a lasting legacy of sharing skills and saving sight.

You can help our Flying Eye Hospital and teams on the ground reach children in Bangladesh and around the world, to save sight and give them a brighter future.

The Flying Eye Hospital, a state-of-the-art eye hospital on-board a converted plane, has visited 95 countries to date, training eye care teams to save sight for generations to come.

Help change a life by donating today

A gift of £25 could fund medicine to treat 25 patients' eye conditions.

A gift of £50 could train five community leaders to identify eye problems and learn where to send people for treatment.

A gift of £75 could go towards giving children with avoidable blindness the life-changing surgeries they need.

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How I Saved My Vision: One Woman's Journey with Glaucoma

At 52, Aisha Khan had perfect vision—or so she thought. She never struggled to read, never needed glasses, and had no history of eye disease. But what she didn't know was that glaucoma, a silent thief of sight, was already affecting her eyes.

"I had no symptoms at all," Aisha recalls. "No pain, no blurry vision—nothing that made me think something was wrong."

Her wake-up call came during a routine eye exam. The optometrist noticed her intraocular pressure was high, a major red flag for glaucoma. Further tests revealed optic nerve damage—a clear sign the disease was already progressing.

"I was shocked. I thought glaucoma only affected older people or those with vision problems. But the doctor told me it can happen to anyone, and by the time symptoms appear, it's often too late."

Glaucoma is an eye disease that damages the optic nerve, usually due to high pressure inside the eye. It's one of the leading causes of blindness worldwide and is often called the "silent thief of sight" because it progresses without noticeable symptoms.

Aisha was lucky. Since her condition was caught early, her doctor prescribed eye drops to lower the pressure in her eyes. She also made lifestyle changes, including a healthy diet rich in leafy greens and regular exercise, both of which help maintain eye health.

"The scariest part was knowing that if I hadn't gone for that check-up, I could have lost my vision," she says. "I never realised how important regular eye exams are."

Now, Aisha is an advocate for glaucoma awareness. She encourages her friends, family, and community members to get their eyes checked, especially if they have risk factors such as:

- Family history of glaucoma
- Being over 40
- Diabetes or high blood pressure
- African, Asian, or Hispanic ancestry

"Glaucoma doesn't have to lead to blindness," Aisha emphasises. "But you must catch it early. I urge everyone—get your eyes tested, even if you think they're fine."

Her story is a powerful reminder that a simple eye exam can save your vision.

Don't wait until it's too late—book an eye test today.

Balancing Faith, Life, and Success: The Trailblazers Who Inspire This Ramadan

In this year's Ramadan Inspirational Focus, we sit down with some of the most influential entrepreneurs, trailblazers, and change-makers who are shaping industries and breaking boundaries. We dive into their personal journeys to discover how they master the delicate balance between life, faith, and work during the holy month. Get ready to be inspired as we unveil the individuals who made the cut this year!

Sara Elham – Islamic Coach

Ramadan to me is a time of profound connection and transformation. Not only do I focus on reconnecting with Allah SWT, but it's also a time when I reconnect with the parts of myself that often get lost in the busyness of life. Ramadan is that missing piece of the puzzle I yearn for throughout the year, the piece that nurtures the soul. People often think of Ramadan as a time of abstaining, but for me it's all about gaining. Gaining clarity, strength, resilience and a renewed sense of purpose.

This Ramadan Insha'Allah I want my focus to be on truly deepening my connection with Allah and his words. I plan to delve into the Quran by journaling and reflecting on its lessons Insha'Allah. I'll also continue exploring the 99 names of Allah, something I began a few Ramadan's ago. I would also love to join a course to enhance my Islamic knowledge. I'd also love to make more effort praying taraweeh at the mosque Insha'Allah and spend meaningful time with family and friends. Those post-iftar and post-taraweeh conversations are always so fun and inspiring!

This Ramadan Insha'Allah I really want to focus on my self-development, especially considering the fewer distractions during the holy month. Discipline is an area of my life that I would like to build on and strengthen particularly in areas of education in deen and my daily habits that contribute to my overall wellbeing. I consider Ramadan to be like a reboot and studies show that it takes roughly 28 days for a habit to form, so I'd like that progress to extend beyond Ramadan.

Preparing for Ramadan is the most exciting part for me. Living in a western country, I try my best to bring the beautiful Ramadan vibes at home with lanterns, Islamic ornaments and pretty lights. It makes Ramadan feel so special. I also reflect on my spiritual goals by journaling to set meaningful intentions for the month.

Coming out of Ramadan I always feel the Ramadan blues because nothing compares to the peace and serenity it brings into our lives. Nevertheless, it gives me the reset my mind, body and soul need. Ramadan reminds me of what's possible when we strive and shows how we can live all year round.

Ramadan is truly what you make of it. If you wholeheartedly embrace this beautiful and blessed month, it has the power to transform you. It's not just about fasting, but it's about discovering who you truly are and what you're capable of when you commit yourself fully. Ramadan lifts the shadows of life's distractions, and it illuminates the parts of ourselves and our souls that need attention, that we often forget. It's a holistic shift of mind, body and soul which is what is needed to reset, realign and grow in ways we never imagined we could.

Follow Sara on @purposefulinsights for more!

Suleman Raza – Philanthropist and Entrepreneur

Ramadan is a month of reflection, gratitude, and giving. It's a time to step back from the busyness of life, reconnect with faith, and focus on self-discipline and kindness. Over the years, Ramadan has become more than just fasting for me—it's about sharing, helping others, and creating stronger bonds with the community. It's a reminder to be humble, grateful, and to use this time to grow spiritually and personally, while also spreading love and generosity to those around me.

To prepare for Ramadan, I focus on setting a positive mindset and clearing space in my life for prayer and reflection. Physically, I adjust my eating habits to prepare for fasting, and emotionally, I take time to reflect on what I'm grateful for and what I want to improve in myself. I look forward to the sense of peace that Ramadan brings and the joy of giving back, whether it's through charity or spending meaningful time with family and the community.

Personally, I hope to strengthen my faith, grow in patience and humility, and do more to help others. Ramadan is all about giving back, and that's what we try to reflect in our business too. This year, like every year, we're sponsoring the Open Iftar for the Ramadan Tent Project to bring people together. We're also launching a Sponsor an Iftar initiative, where individuals can donate meals to local mosques or those in need. We've created special Ramadan food boxes for families and are hosting an Iftar buffet at our Southall branch. Ramadan gives us the chance to serve not just food, but the spirit of togetherness and kindness.

I stay connected by focusing on prayer, reading the Quran, and taking time for reflection. Acts of kindness, like giving to charity or helping those in need, are also a big part of my Ramadan. For me, it's about gratitude—being thankful for what I have and using this month to share blessings with others. Spending time with family and the community also strengthens my faith and reminds me of the true spirit of Ramadan: unity, generosity, and love.

We adjust our offerings to reflect the needs of the month. We've created special Ramadan food boxes designed to provide balanced, wholesome meals for families. At our Southall branch, we're hosting an Iftar buffet so people can come together to break their fast in a warm, welcoming environment. Our focus is on providing hearty, traditional dishes that truly capture the essence of Ramadan.

We take extra care of our team during Ramadan by creating a supportive and understanding environment. We adjust shifts to suit those fasting, encourage regular breaks, and provide pre-iftar snacks. Ramadan is a time of giving, and that includes showing care and compassion to our employees to ensure they feel valued, motivated, and supported during this blessed month.

Follow Suleman Raza on @iamsulemanraza

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upl

Xperience Pakistan

Saadia Baber – Founder of Sikhana & Xperience Pakistan

For me Ramadan is my favourite time of year. I find the month not just a healthy detox but also a spiritual and mindful one. A time to pause from this world and to focus on our greater existence and the life after. Since having my children its significance has grown as one becomes more self-aware and focused on leading by example, so I try and go the extra mile, especially at iftaar ensuring we use the 15 minutes before breaking our fast to watch an episode from the Yaseen institutes Ramadan series, which they develop every year and then do a collective dua. I also deliberately keep the Iftar simple, as the essence of the month is about simplicity and not being excessive.

Increasingly in today's world of Islamophobia, changing narratives about Muslims and Islam has become more important for me & Ramadan is a great month to bring this to life. Educating the true meaning about Ramadan beyond just fasting, which entails being more mindful about your community, irrespective of faith and giving back is something I want to get across to my children and the west. During Covid I set up the Ramadan food parcels initiative, in which we provide local families with a 3-course hot meal along with some shopping essentials, every Saturday, with the help of volunteers made up of friends, family and people who want to get involved, whom I have found via groups on social media. This requires a lot of prep and organising and starts 2 months ahead of the month, which then helps me to start feeling the connection to the month earlier.

My business model for both Sikhana & Xperience Pakistan, is based on doing business with a social purpose which benefits the community, therefore both personal and business goals are always entwined. This year with the increase in the Islamophobia rhetoric, I would like to use the month to get as many Muslims founded businesses involved in my Ramadan food parcel initiative so that we can help even more struggling families in the UK. I want to engage schools so that children can help with the packing and understand how volunteering time is just as precious if not more important than money and that everyone of us can make a difference. I am also in the middle of developing a series of downloadable workbooks about different Muslim countries around the world, covering geography, history and culture, to help children aged 8-13 have a better understanding. These will be available on Sikhana.uk in the middle of February so that children can do these as an engaging exercise in the month of Ramadan.

Like many I increase my Ibaadat in Ramadan, ensuring I finish the Quran in the month. However over the years I have also used the month to focus on studying the religion more, dedicating time to read up on Hadith books, watch more content on YouTube to learn more about the faiths or about people's journey, which inspires me to improve myself & also what else I can incorporate into my business, which will help play a positive role in other people's lives. I also become more mindful of my time & how productively I use it, wanting to ensure every minute helps with me getting good points and improve my chances to enter heaven in the life after, so I avoid watching drama's or movies and if I watch tv it is also focused on learning more about Islam.

Eid is a very special time for all of us and it is always a family affair spent at my parents with my siblings and their children. It is a day when both my husband and I have always made a point of taking a day off work and taking the kids out of school, so that they understand the significance of it. Although we tend to give cash to the children, we have started to incorporate some aspect of fun like having a lucky dip gift just for the children so that they feel it is fun and they have something tangible, although as they get older it is getting more and more difficult. If on the weekend we try and use day 2 to have a get together with friends.

Follow Saadia Baber on @Sikhana_luxury_fragrances_ & @xperiencepakistan

Hamza Uddin – Professional Boxer

My daily schedule is constantly changing. Although routine is important, my team and I enjoy mixing things up to keep us all on our toes. Generally, I train three times a day, totalling around 7-8 hours. While this is a lot of training, it's the norm for fighters at my level, as there is so much emphasis on physical fitness and on learning and developing into the best possible fighter I can be.

The main reason for this is discipline. The discipline to go to bed early and on time, to eat what my nutritionist has planned for me, and to avoid social interactions where possible helps me get through several weeks and months of intense training schedules.

My diet is admittedly quite restricted, but it consists of nutritious whole foods that fuel my training and recovery. Clean white meats like chicken and fish are prominent. I take vitamins and supplements, but nothing can beat the nutrition from good food.

There's a famous saying: "Boxing is 75% mental and 25% physical." With all the sacrifices and loneliness that come with the sport, it can be very difficult, but it's important to have faith in God and to surround myself with good people, even if there are only a few.

Training during Ramadan is difficult. I maintain the same diet and training sessions, but we adjust the timings to get the most out of my sessions and to refuel effectively. For example, I train just before Iftar so I can replenish immediately afterward.

Despite the physical challenges, I find that training while fasting during Ramadan is when I feel my best. I think this is due to the spiritual aspect and the atmosphere of the people around me, as most of my training team are Muslim, which contributes to that feeling.

Hydration is the most important factor. Training intensely while fasting can cause severe dehydration, so adjusting the timings of my training sessions and rehydrating when I'm not fasting is crucial—definitely more important than eating tasty food.

My goals for this year, inside the ring, are to win a title. It's time to add some more belts to the collection! Outside the ring, I aim to continue being a role model for the youth, but on a larger scale.

Follow Hamza Uddin on @realhamzauddin

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KNIGHTS SOLICITORS
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THANKFUL

From Loss to Legacy: Once Upon a Dua

By Angela Youngman

Born out of despair and loss, Once upon a Dua is a Scandinavian-influenced Islamic-inspired baby lifestyle brand that is proving popular with people of all faiths and none.

Co-founder and CEO Jayda Zaman told British Muslim that “Once upon a Dua is the first of its kind. A brand born out of loss, which left us yearning to create meaningful moments with our loved ones and ultimately make the world a better place.”

Jayda had always wanted to set up her own business, but the time never felt right. She had originally trained as a maths teacher, as well as a bridal and makeup artist. The loss of Fatimah, her third child shortly before giving birth, changed her life. “She almost gave up on life. She was so traumatised by that loss”, commented her husband Ash. A visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem changed everything. Seeing the plight of the Palestinian people and finding her Islamic faith strengthened during the visit, Jayda began to think more positively about the future commenting “It is where we originally came up with the name Once Upon a Dua. I had always wanted to work with my husband on a business that is good for humanity and the planet, because we both have very altruistic natures. I said to my husband ‘wouldn’t it be amazing to create a business that had so many blessings in it, we could help to be the answer to the duas (prayers) of those that are less fortunate.”

With a young family, Jayda and Ash noticed the lack of a quality Muslim kids lifestyle brand offering products that resonated with their faith, were functional, quality and safe. They began to research potential opportunities to fill the gap.

“Ash registered the company when our youngest child was just two months old. He came back and said, ‘you have always wanted to create a company, now you have the chance.’ I said “I have a newborn child’ but he pointed out ‘When is ever a good time?’

Over the next year, Ash focused on sourcing potential products that would match the ethos of the brand. The

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couple wanted to offer quality long lasting sustainable products, that would fulfil a need, that would be inspiring, possess widespread appeal and provide keepsakes that would capture family moments. They also wanted to work with manufacturers who held the same values, especially small businesses.

"I got to test things with my little ones, see how children react and learn," commented Jayda. Among the first products was a unique range of crocheted Hijabi dolls, designed by Jayda and Ash. Made by artisan women living in Turkey, the dolls offered them a regular source of income. As soon as the doll became available online, it went viral. Sales rocketed. "We would like to have more UK artisans involved - if anyone is interested please get in touch!" says Jayda.

"Once Upon a Dua has grown thanks to our marketing, especially on social media. It has been hard work. We have been blessed to have companies and magazines reaching out to us. We have been approached by and appeared in Vogue, Evening Standard, Telegraph and all the big magazines, " commented Jayda.

In addition, Once Upon a Dua has taken part in numerous pop up shops in places like John Lewis as well as at exhibitions enabling them to talk to shoppers, get reactions and promote the brand.

Less than two years since Once Upon a Dua was officially launched, the company has developed an enviable reputation. The quality and uniqueness of its products, along with its ethos, have led to over 34 industry-recognised awards granted by organisations like Mother & Baby, People's Choice Gift of the Year, Junior Design Awards, Top 50 influential Muslims in Europe business award.

Jayda and Ash plan to continue growing the business, but are determined not to lose sight of their brand ethos focusing on ways of making the world a better place. "We are working towards being B-Corp Certified, which means we meet high standards of environmental and social performance. We will be joining a community dedicated to positive change," Jayda says.

"We are at the early stages of creating a household brand that serves the global Muslim community. Our vision from day 1 was to create a global brand that appeals to the global Muslim community and we can see the growing demand from various parts of the world."

"We will always feel the loss of Fatimah but I can proudly say she was the pebble that caused the ripples in the ocean for what we have created today. She gave me the strength to say she didn't leave this world in vain. Allah (saw) had a purpose for us and I am grateful everyday for the blessings. I hope our story inspires others, especially the hard working mums and dads that are going through their own life struggles and I want them to know, they've got this! 'After Hardship, comes ease' (Qur'an)"

SHUKR
SABR
SALAM

Give, Glow & Gift with Love This Ramadan

The blessing of Ramadan & Eid is all about giving, and what better way to celebrate than with thoughtful gifts for your loved ones? Whether it's luxurious treats, wellness experiences, or unique keepsakes, this gifting season is the perfect time to share joy, gratitude, and generosity. Let's make every gesture count!

1.The Luxury Halal Hamper – Harrods, £185
An exquisite curation of indulgent delicacies, thoughtfully designed to offer a luxurious gift experience. A refined selection perfect for celebrating special occasions with unparalleled taste and sophistication.

2.Maison Crivelli – Hibiscus Mahajád Extrait de Parfum, 50ml – Selfridges, £205
A signature fragrance that envelops the senses in a rich, floral bouquet. The Hibiscus Mahajád Extrait de Parfum exemplifies Maison Crivelli's avant-garde approach to perfumery, blending vibrant florals with a rich oriental base for a truly distinctive scent.

3.Bateel Midas Filled Dates, 500g – Selfridges, £54.99
Sourced from the finest orchards, these premium dates are filled with a decadent mixture, offering an exceptional balance of natural sweetness and luxury. A sophisticated treat for the discerning palate.

4.Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Zaytoun - £9.25
Produced by a collective of Palestinian farmers, this extra virgin olive oil boasts exceptional quality and flavour, offering robust and complex notes. A product rooted in heritage, bringing authentic Mediterranean richness to every dish.

5. Diptyque Orphéon Eau de Parfum, 75ml – John Lewis & Partners, £160
An homage to the ambiance of Parisian nightlife, Diptyque's Orphéon Eau de Parfum transports you to an elegant baroque setting with its intoxicating blend of floral and woody accords. A statement scent that embodies timeless refinement.

6. Kaaba 20g Gold Bullion Minted Bar – Royal Mint, £1,604.23
This exquisitely minted bar of 20g of pure gold pays tribute to one of the most sacred symbols in the Islamic world, offering an investment in both heritage and precious metal. An impeccable addition to any collection of fine bullion.

7.Eid Mubarak Cakes, Cakebox - £39.99
Designed for a celebratory feast, these bespoke Eid Mubarak cakes combine artistry and indulgence. Each cake is handcrafted to perfection, offering a delightful experience that mirrors the joy and unity of the Eid celebration.

8.Neom Waterless Pod Mini Starter Pack in Nude - £73
This innovative device elevates the art of aromatherapy with a sleek, waterless design. The starter pack, featuring the elegant nude variant, offers a harmonious blend of essential oils, transforming any space into a sanctuary of calm and tranquillity.

This refined selection truly reflects the epitome of luxury and thoughtful gifting for those who appreciate the finest quality in every aspect of life.

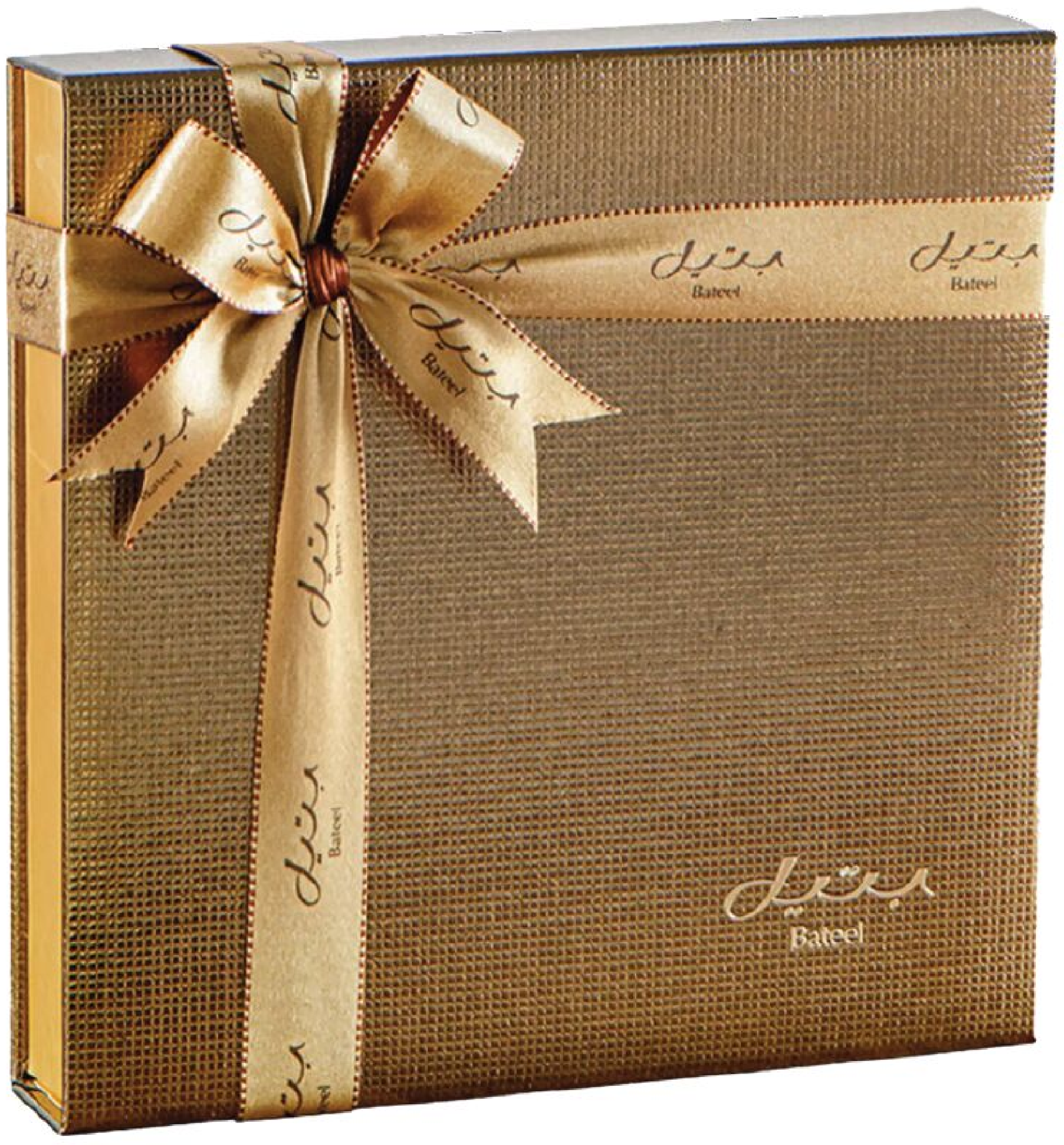
1

Harrods
KNIGHTSBRIDGE ROAST
08
SALTED CARAMEL TRUFFLES
CHOCOLATE ALMONDS

2

Hibiscus Mahajád
EXTRAIT DE PARFUM
Maison Crivelli

3


Bateel

4

Rooted in Time & Tradition
زيتون
ZAYTOUN
FROM PALESTINE
ORGANIC EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
Hand-picked & rain-fed with a warm peppery taste

5

diptyque
34 boulevard saint germain
paris 5e
ORPHEON

6

7

Eid Mubarak

8

NEOM
WELLBEING | LONDON
PERFECT NIGHT'S SLEEP ESSENTIAL OIL BLEND
10 mL e 0.33 US fl. oz.

INTERNATI
WAQF FU
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Bee farming taking place in Jordan

Empowering Communities Through Sustainable Waqf

The International Waqf Fund is redefining the traditional Islamic endowment model, ensuring long-term impact through ethical investments and sustainable development projects. CEO Dr. Mohammad Alsaghir shares his insights on the Fund's mission, innovative approach, and future goals.

Dr Mohammad Al-Saghir - Managing Director

What is the mission and vision of the International Waqf Fund?
The Fund's mission is to advance Waqf models that drive sustainable development and social justice. Its vision is to position the Waqf sector as a global leader in development. Unlike traditional charities, the Fund invests donations in Sharia-compliant, low-risk assets, ensuring long-term impact. By generating sustainable returns, it provides continuous support for rightsholders, making every contribution a lasting legacy.

How is the Fund modernising Waqf to address today's challenges?
The Fund integrates innovative fundraising methods, aligns projects with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals,

How we use **your donation:**

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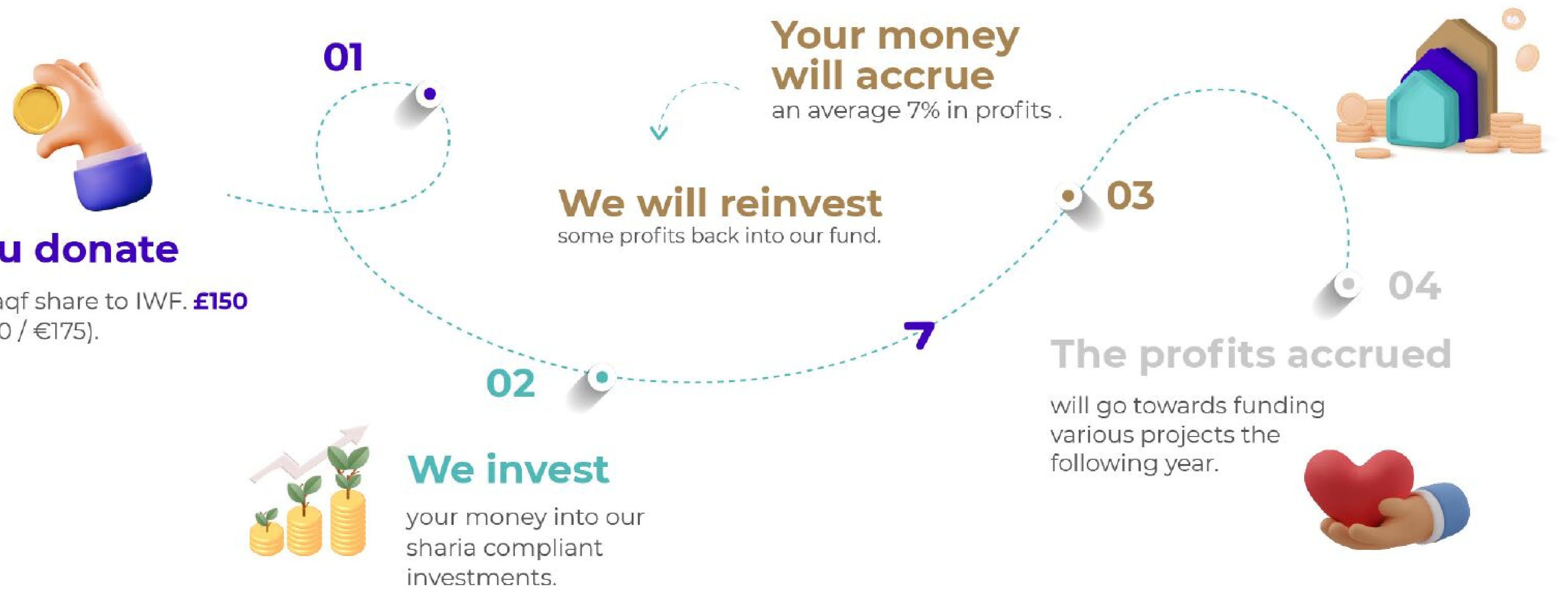
Infinite Good



01

You donate
a Waqf share to IWF. **£150** ($200 / €175).

02

We invest
your money into our sharia compliant investments.

03

Your money will accrue
an average 7% in profits .

We will reinvest
some profits back into our fund.

04

The profits accrued
will go towards funding various projects the following year.

Greenhouse project - Albania

Maternity Centre - Mali

and develops supportive legal frameworks. Technology, such as blockchain, enhances transparency and efficiency in managing assets and donations. Additionally, the Fund empowers communities through sustainable livelihoods, education, and healthcare, ensuring Waqf remains relevant in addressing global challenges.

Can you share recent projects that showcase the Fund's impact?
In 2024, the Fund launched impactful projects (utilising the profits from their investments) across 10 countries. In Afghanistan, it invested (allocated) £50,000 to support 100 vulnerable households with business development. In Somalia, it renovated 38 classrooms, benefiting 550 orphaned children. The Greenhouse Project in Albania provided 11 greenhouses, promoting sustainable agriculture. These initiatives, funded by Waqf Shares, highlight the Fund's commitment to education, economic empowerment, and sustainable living standards.

What strategies ensure Waqf investments provide long-term benefits?
The Fund prioritises low-risk, Sharia-compliant investments and reinvests returns to maintain growth. Projects align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring lasting impact. Community empowerment through vocational training, education, and healthcare is central to our strategy. By leveraging technology for transparency and efficiency, the Fund maximizes the effectiveness of its investments, ensuring sustainable benefits for generations.

How does the Fund maintain transparency, and how can people support its mission?
The Fund employs blockchain technology for efficient asset management and adheres to strict governance frameworks, with regular audits and published financial reports. Individuals and organizations can contribute by donating to specific Waqf Shares, supporting fundraising campaigns, volunteering, partnering with the Fund, or leaving a legacy gift in their will. These efforts help sustain long-term, impactful projects worldwide.

What are the Fund's key goals for the future?
The Fund aims to expand its reach by increasing investments in education, healthcare, and livelihoods. We will enhance our use of technology, such as blockchain, for greater transparency and efficiency. Additionally, we plan to forge new partnerships with global organizations to broaden our donor base and extend our project impact. These initiatives will ensure sustainable development and long-term benefits for communities worldwide.

Start your legacy today, visit;
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Saima Mohsin

Journalism, Ramadan & the Pursuit of Balance.

In this exclusive feature, British Pakistani presenter and Sky News anchor Saima Mohsin opens up to creative director Kaniz Ali about her dynamic career in journalism. From reporting on global crises to interviewing world leaders and celebrities, Saima reflects on the relentless journey that has shaped her path. She shares insights on her work, her connection to Ramadan, and her personal passions—from travel to interior design—while offering valuable advice for aspiring media professionals.

Kaniz: Talk to us about your background
Saima: I'm a British Pakistani Muslim woman who grew up in South London with her 3 siblings. I've been an International Correspondent reporting from 28 countries on coups, elections, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, missing planes and protests. I've interviewed Hillary Clinton, Benazir Bhutto, Imran Khan and celebrities like Tom Cruise and most of the Bollywood stars including the Big B, Amitabh Bachchan. I'm now a presenter on Sky News. I have just got married too - we had a beautiful nikkah ceremony surrounded by our families and close childhood friends - we made our own nikkah partition!

Kaniz: What inspired you to head into the world of presenting ?
Saima: My news-obsessed mum, Anjam! Well I always wanted to be a singer and actress or a correspondent travelling around the world - mum said "you're going to read the news on the BBC" and I did!... and then I did on ITV and Channel 4 and Sky News. Her prayers and my aunt's have carried me and no doubt kept me safe in some sticky situations. It's been a real privilege, and I love my job.

Kaniz: What has been your favourite moment in tv?
Saima: It has to be the people I've met - the little kids running to school up mountains, the women entrepreneurs in remote areas. I've been lucky enough to cover some of the world's biggest stories often amongst the first on scene - Bin Laden's capture and killing, Malala's shooting, the missing plane MH370. And there are also some really fun stories - like Prince Charles' & Camilla's Royal Tour to Pakistan or interviewing Asia's top chef Gaggan and travelling around the world of course. My father Mohsin loved to travel.

To be honest some of the best moments are off camera - with my teams, on the road, finding those moments to laugh and joke, listen to music or talk and get to know one another - often in the middle of some major story, it's my cameramen and producers and so many others in the newsroom that make this job so fun. I could make a series about life on the road!

CEO / Editor of Chief: Natasha Syed
Managing Editor: Shumila Shah
Creative Director: Kaniz Ali
Photography: Danny Singh
Make Up & Styling: Kaniz Ali
Assisted by Iman Chana
Location / Shot In: Kanishka, Mayfair London

Kaniz: What does Ramadhan mean to you?
Saima: Ramzaan for me is about prayer, reflection, empathy

and recognising all we have. It's a dedicated month where we are all reminded to take the time to connect directly with God, to appreciate all that Allah has given us, to have empathy for all who don't have what we have, for charity, and to cleanse our bodies, mind and soul. It's the original ultimate detox bootcamp - that's so trendy right now, but with a lot of spiritual reflection too!

The buzz in the house even in the early hours, always created that sense of celebration as well as being so aware just how lucky we are that we can have the two meals a day at Sunrise and Sunset that so many millions can't.

Kaniz: What is your favourite part of Ramdhan?
Saima: The sense of community and unity - where everyone is doing the same thing at the same time. The sense of a month where we can all take some time out in our busy days to really focus on our mind, body and soul.

Kaniz: What food do you most look forward to during the month of Ramadhan?
Saima: To be honest - food is not my focus in Ramadan. It's the lack of food others have that I try to focus on, that is the point. My family don't do anything majorly different except for a delicious fruit chaat with spices that my mum always makes and a mint lemonade that my sister Ruby always makes to end our fast. I eat porridge to keep me going and have dates for sehri too for the nutrients. I love dates and eat them all year round - so they are definitely a favourite fixture. I think I really like knowing I'm doing something to reflect and detox the most.

Kaniz: What is the best advice you can give to someone fasting?
Saima: Remember why you're doing it! that has to be the most important thing.

Don't worry who else is or isn't. If you're elderly, ill, pregnant, breastfeeding remember you don't have to. Islam is such a practical religion that it has so many flexible adaptations to make it work for you.

Kaniz: If Saima could disappear anywhere in the world where would it be and why?
Saima: I can't tell you cause then I can't disappear (Laughs) Probably somewhere in the stunning mountains in Pakistan in Skardu or Chitral, otherwise an island off Thailand or Malaysia. Somewhere close to nature.

Kaniz: What is the best advice you would give to someone entering the world of media?
Saima: Stay focused, know your goal (s), do lots of work experience to work out what you like/don't like and to develop a network of contacts.

Kaniz: If Saima was not a presenter, what would she be?
Saima: A travel writer or an interior designer. I love renovating homes and have a keen eye for mixing the traditional with the modern and am switching over to as many climate- friendly practices as possible.

I'm a traveller at heart though.

Fatima Zaman's Journey in Mental Health, Social Care, and Advocacy

With over 20 years of experience in social care specialising in rehabilitation and mental health recovery, award-winning leader Fatima Zaman speaks exclusively to Kaniz Ali at British Muslim Magazine.

Fatima's accolades include King's College London Award 2018, The Bharat Bhagyavidhata Mahatma Ghandi award for Social Activist and Entrepreneur 2024 and the Pakistan Achievement Awards Humanitarian of The Year 2024.

Kaniz: Talk to us about your background?

Fatima: I come from a family with a proud legacy of service and dedication. My maternal grandfather was a Colonel in the Royal British Army prior to the partition of Pakistan, and my father, who served in the Pakistan Army, retired as a Major. Both were part of the artillery, and their dedication to their respective roles left an indelible mark on me. I am the second of six children and share a particularly close bond with my mother.

In the early 1990s, my family moved from Karachi, Pakistan, to the UK, bringing with us the values of unity, resilience, and a commitment to one another. Growing up in a close-knit family instilled in me a strong sense of purpose and the desire to give back, which naturally led me to a career in social care.

After completing my education at Goldsmiths College, I began my journey in social care as a volunteer. Over the past 25 years, I have dedicated myself to this field, focusing on recovery and rehabilitation for adults with mental illnesses. Today, I run a group of care homes, where our mission is to provide innovative, compassionate, and recovery-focused care.

My dedication and innovative approaches to mental health care have been recognised on several occasions. In 2018, I was honoured by King's College London for my pioneering work in recovery and rehabilitation. In 2021, I was Highly Commended for the Women of the Future Awards in the

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Interview by Kaniz Ali

Public Service category. I have also received accolades from the Pakistan Achievement Awards, including the Humanitarian of the Year award in 2024 and a place on the prestigious British Pakistani POWER 100 list. That same year, I was awarded the Bharat Bhagya Mahatma Gandhi Award for Entrepreneurship and Social Activism. Recently, I was recognised as a Top 100 Influential People Winner for 2025.

Beyond my professional accomplishments, I am deeply committed to causes close to my heart. As an Ambassador for the Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education, as a Councillor for Selsdon Vale and Forestdale in Croydon, I actively engage in local governance, ensuring my community thrives.

In addition, I contribute to the Conservative Muslim Forum as an executive member and serve on the steering committee of the Conservative Friends of Pakistan, fostering community engagement and representation. Currently, I am collaborating with the British Asian Trust, providing expertise for transformative projects in Pakistan, particularly at the Cowasjee Mental Institute.

I am proud to be recognised for my integrity, justice, and compassion. These values drive me, both in my personal life and professional endeavours, as I strive to support vulnerable individuals and uplift my community. Whether it is advocating for mental health care, empowering underprivileged children through education, or working towards social justice, I am deeply committed to improving the lives of others.

My journey is a testament to the power of dedication, empathy, and perseverance. With every step, I aim to be a catalyst for change, inspiring hope and transformation in the lives of those I serve.

Kaniz: What inspired you to head into the world of politics?
Fatima: I was inspired to enter the world of politics by a multitude of deeply rooted motivations, each tied to a vision of creating meaningful and lasting change. At the core of this decision was a profound desire to tackle pressing societal issues such as inequality, injustice, and the persistent lack of support for the social care sector, particularly in the realm of mental health. These challenges have a significant impact on the lives of so many, and I felt a deep sense of responsibility to work toward solutions that prioritize empathy, inclusivity, and resilience.

Kaniz: You are also an entrepreneur tell us more?
Fatima: My entrepreneurial journey began with a pivotal realisation that the conventional methods of delivering care to individuals diagnosed with mental disorders were often insufficient in addressing the full scope of their needs.

I believed there had to be a better way, a way that was compassionate, empowering, and genuinely transformative. This belief ignited a deep passion within me to redefine how care was provided, and with the support of my family, we took a bold step by converting our own family home into a nurturing care facility. This home was designed not just to offer clinical support but to provide a sanctuary rooted in empathy, recovery, and hope.

Kaniz: What does Ramadhan mean to you?
Fatima: Ramadan holds a deeply personal and sacred place in my heart as a time to strengthen my connection with Allah through increased worship, prayer, and recitation of the Qur'an. It is a month where I consciously step back from the distractions of daily life to focus on spiritual growth, discipline, and gratitude for Allah's countless blessings.

My favourite part of Ramadhan is the sense of deep piety and spirituality that permeates the entire month. It is a time of reflection, self-discipline, and devotion, offering an opportunity to strengthen one's connection with Allah. The act of fasting, which goes beyond refraining from food and drink, serves as a reminder of the importance of self-control, empathy for others, and the temporary nature of worldly desires. It is a month that allows for personal growth, a time to purify the soul, and an opportunity to seek forgiveness and mercy from Allah.

Kaniz: If Fatima could disappear anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?
Fatima: If I could disappear anywhere in the world, it would undoubtedly be somewhere immersed in the serene beauty of nature. There is something deeply restorative about the peace and tranquillity that only nature can provide. In a world filled with constant noise and the demands of everyday life, finding a space to disconnect is not just a luxury, but a necessity.

Kaniz: If Fatima was not a councillor, what would she be?
Fatima: If I was not serving as a councillor, I would undoubtedly channel my energy and dedication into my true passion as a mental health professional. My unwavering commitment to recovery and rehabilitation is evident in my ongoing collaborations and initiatives. Currently, I have partnered with the British Asian Trust, offering my expertise in transformative mental health projects in Pakistan, particularly with the Cowasjee Mental Institute, a centre working to redefine mental health care in the region. Through this collaboration, I am actively contributing to a system that provides accessible, compassionate, and effective mental health services, aiming to bring dignity and hope to those affected.

> My dedication and innovative approaches to mental health care have been recognised on several occasions...

Kaniz Ali: Beauty Icon, Humanitarian, and Trendsetter

Kaniz Ali, an internationally renowned role model, has solidified her place as a lifelong trendsetter in the beauty industry. She is one of the most influential and inspiring makeup artists and beauty editors of our time. Passionate and focused, Kaniz has redefined what it means to be a true beauty expert.

A powerhouse in the world of beauty, Kaniz has gone from strength to strength in her 15-year journey within this cutthroat industry, making her a game-changer in the glitz and glam world.

Her impressive portfolio includes several international awards and a staggering 50 magazine covers, all while working with high-profile celebrities across the globe. She has had the privilege of styling and working with an impressive roster of clients, including Kareena Kapoor Khan, Parineeti Chopra, Sonam Kapoor, Urvashi Rautela, Faryal Makhdoom, Amy Jackson, and Humza Yousaf. With over 15 years in the industry, Kaniz has worked on numerous magazine covers and with top-tier celebrities worldwide, establishing herself as a leading figure in beauty.

Despite her monumental success, Kaniz remains incredibly grounded and humble.

Kaniz's expertise goes beyond just working with celebrities; she also glams up real brides on their special day, bringing out the best in each individual.

In addition to her work in the beauty industry, Kaniz runs a prestigious makeup academy in London, training aspiring makeup artists. Outside of beauty, she dedicates time to humanitarian efforts in war-torn countries, working in refugee camps, providing emergency aid, and contributing to sustainable long-term projects such as building water wells, boreholes, schools, and mosques. Her humanitarian aid work spans over 13 years and includes projects in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Rohingya, Bangladesh, and Ghana.

Dedicated to beautifying celebrities, brides, and writing about beauty for multiple publications worldwide, Kaniz has earned her reputation through her drive, ambition, and creativity.

What are your favourite beauty products?
Kaniz: That's a tough one! I have so many favourites! But if I had to pick a few, it would be:

- ***Huda Beauty's Full Coverage Concealer***: It gives excellent, full coverage.
- ***Too Faced Born This Way Foundation:*** Fantastic for building different levels of coverage, from medium to heavy, depending on the look you're going for.
- ***Charlotte Tilbury's Setting Spray:*** It's long-lasting, gives an amazing glow, and doesn't leave that tight, dry feeling on the skin.

What are the pros and cons of working in the beauty industry?
Kaniz: For me, there are definitely more pros than cons. One of the biggest advantages is being my own boss. Managing my business gives me full control over the direction and ethos of my work. I love the flexibility it offers, like choosing which shoots to participate in and working around my own schedule.

As an international makeup artist, I've had the blessed opportunity to work with celebrities worldwide, glam up real brides for their wedding day, write for beauty publications, creatively direct magazine shoots, and even interview stars. One day, I could be styling a Bollywood actress for a front-cover shoot, and the next, I'm prepping a beautiful bride for her big day. The following day might involve teaching aspiring artists at my academy. Each day brings something new and exciting. The beauty of this work is connecting with different people, cultures, and religions—there's always something to learn.

The downside? No routine. And sometimes, taking on too much work can mean very little time for myself.

Glamming and styling British actress Nina Wadia

Creatively styling and directing singer - Raghav Mathur

You're involved in so many different areas! What inspired you to branch out?
Kaniz: Being a makeup artist and beauty editor is a huge part of my life, but I've always believed that we're only young once, so we should follow our passions and try different things. Aside from beauty, I love volunteering in war-torn countries, providing on-the-ground aid to those who need it most. I believe in giving back and using my platform to raise awareness about global issues.

Being a humanitarian aid worker keeps me grounded and makes me truly appreciate the life I have. It's a perfect balance—one week I could be glamming up a celebrity in a palace, and the next, I could be on the ground in a refugee camp in Palestine or Lebanon, providing emergency aid. It's extreme, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

If Kaniz Ali could be someone else for a day, who would she be?
Kaniz: I'd still be me! Alhamdulillah, I love my life. I've always believed in working hard to create the life you want, making it fun and amazing so that you never want to be anyone else. Allah SWT (God) has blessed us all with unique gifts, and it's up to us to figure out what they are. Embrace your uniqueness and fall in love with it every day. Enjoy being you, and the right things and people will find you.

What's your favourite type of food?
Kaniz: Anything with spice! I love spicy food, especially with chillies. If there's no chilli, I can't eat it. You'll always see me asking for extra spice—it's the Bengali in me!

Your best friend is...?
Kaniz: "Caffeine"—because my brain doesn't function without it! And my Surah Book—I always keep it with me. I'm a huge believer in balancing the Duniya (world) and Akhirah (hereafter). Keeping the Qur'an close and reading or listening to it whenever I can is a big part of my life.

What does Ramadan mean to you?
Kaniz: For me, Ramadan is all about getting closer to Allah SWT, reconnecting with my faith, and spending time with the Qur'an. It's a time to focus on my spiritual growth and make a conscious effort to maximize the goodness in the month, whether that's spending time with family or doing charity.

What is the best advice you can give someone fasting?
Kaniz: Wake up for Suhoor and eat something, even if it's something small—there's barakah (blessing) in it. Make a conscious effort to understand why we fast and try to spend that time doing various acts of worship (ibadah). Do as much good as you can during this month, even if it's as simple as smiling. The rewards are phenomenal. Ramadan is a perfect time to implement changes in your life and then continue those habits even after the month ends.

What is your favourite part of Ramadan?
Kaniz: It has to be the unity of the Ummah (global Muslim community). It's so inspiring to see the world come together during those four weeks. As an aid worker, I spend much of the month on the ground providing food aid to war-torn countries. Watching displaced people come together during Ramadan, and seeing how much they cherish this time, is incredibly heartwarming.

Glamming up BBC presenter Noreen Khan

Creatively styling & glamming up Pakistani Actress - Sadia Khan

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UNDETECTABLE MEDIUM-TO-FULL COVERAGE FOUNDATION
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Creatively styling and glamming up Bollywood Actress - Parineeti Chopra

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FLAWLESS
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PARTY ALL NIGHT; STAY ALL DAY!
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Setting Spray, £32
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HUDABEAUTY

**Huda Beauty's Full
Coverage Concealer,
£24 Sephora**

Behind the Mic with Noreen Khan

In this Ramadan issue of British Muslim Magazine, Kaniz Ali interviews Noreen Khan, talking about all things Noreen!

CEO / Editor of Chief:	Natasha Syed
Managing Editor:	Shumila Shah
Creative Director:	Kaniz Ali
Photography:	Danny Singh
Make Up & Styling:	Kaniz Ali Assisted by Iman Chana
Location / Shot In:	Jeru Mayfair, London
Outfits by:	Lilly's Boutique London
Jewellery by:	The Jewellery Trunk
Location / Shot at:	Colonel Saab, Trafalgar Square, London, UK

Kaniz: Talk to us about your background.
Noreen: I was born and raised in Bedford, where I spent my teens and early twenties. After that, I worked in London, and from there, I entered the world of media!

Kaniz: What inspired you to head into presenting?
Noreen: It was my love for music that got me into radio and presenting.

Kaniz: You've recently entered the world of stand-up comedy and reached success in it very quickly. What do you love most about stand-up comedy?
Noreen: I can totally just be myself and not hold back! I love to share my observations and stories, and it is genuinely so much fun.

Kaniz: What has been your most memorable moment in presenting?
Noreen: In radio, there have been so many memorable moments—from interviewing some of my favourite stars in the world of showbiz, like Madhuri Dixit, Steven Gerrard, Shah Rukh Khan, and lots of brilliant cricketers. And of course, building a lovely connection with my listeners.

Kaniz: What does Ramadan mean to you?
Noreen: For me, Ramadan is a special month where we really get to discipline our lives in so many ways. We abstain from many things, which is so good for the body, mind, and soul. It also brings us closer to our faith and really makes us reflect on life, think more compassionately, and give to charity.

Kaniz: What is your favourite part of Ramadan?
Noreen: I think it's knowing that there are literally millions of us around the globe observing the holy month. And of course, spending more time with family and close ones.

Kaniz: What food do you look forward to the most during Ramadan?
Noreen: I don't change my diet too much or indulge in fancy foods during Ramadan. I've been a vegetarian since I was 13, so I just enjoy simple foods like daal and rice!

Kaniz: What is the best advice you can give to someone fasting?
Noreen: Don't skip sehri and eat good, nutritious food when you open your fast. Try to stay away from all the fried stuff.

Kaniz: If Noreen could disappear anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?
Noreen: Probably Bali! (Laughs) I love that place!

Kaniz: What is the best advice you would give to anyone thinking of entering the world of presenting?
Noreen: Be prepared to share lots of yourself—your life and your interests—with the audience. Get to know the station or channel that you want to work on inside and out; get geeky about it, like I did! Finally, just enjoy yourself and make sure you have fun. It's such a great job to do!

Kaniz: If Noreen was not a presenter, what would she be?
Noreen: Well, I'd be doing what I'm doing now—stand-up comedy, lots of yoga, and travelling the world!!

Healing the Body with Zam Zam Water

By Tahira Khan

Zam Zam water is sacred and holds immense significance in Islamic history and culture. It is believed to have numerous health benefits, including boosting the immune system. The water has many healing properties and detoxifying effects. It acts as a powerful tool for healing and detoxifying the body. Incorporating it into your daily routine can lead to improved health and well-being. Stay hydrated and stay healthy with this sacred and holy water.

Benefits of Zam Zam

Rich in minerals, Purifies the body, Boosts immune system. Promotes overall well-being. This water contains high levels of essential minerals that are vital for a strong immune system like Potassium, Magnesium, Calcium, and antioxidant properties. The water's antioxidant properties help to protect the immune system from oxidative stress and damage caused by free radicals.

Proper hydration ensures the immune system functions optimally by supporting the body's natural defence mechanisms. The water's purifying properties help to rid the body of toxins that can weaken the immune system. It also boosts energy levels. Drinking Zam Zam water can increase energy, allowing the immune system to function more efficiently, especially first thing in the morning. The water's anti-inflammatory properties can help reduce inflammation in the body, supporting overall immune health.

How Zam Zam Heals the Body

The holy water is easily absorbed by the body, allowing its beneficial properties to quickly reach the cells and organs that support the immune system. This fast absorption rate ensures that the body can reap the rewards of the water almost instantly. It flushes out toxins, Restores pH balance, Hydrates cells and Enhances cellular function. It also cleanses out the digestive system, supports liver function, Improves kidney health, and clears the skin.

Incorporating into Your Daily Routine

Drink the water daily, and try to use for ablution. You can also bathe in it, I try to add a small amount into my bathing routine. You can also cook with Zam Zam and incorporate it into your skincare routine by mixing it with rosewater and use as a natural toner. There is also a new skincare cream which is out on the market to recently called “Zamy Desert Radiance Face Cream” which I would also recommend.

It is important to ensure purity and moderation is key before consuming the water. In conclusion, Zam Zam water is a powerful elixir that can enhance the immune system's function by providing essential minerals, antioxidants, and hydration. Including this special water in your daily routine may help boost your immune system and promote overall health and well-being. So time to make the Ramadan resolutions during this holy month.

ZAMY
DESERT RADIANCE FACE CREAM
Niacinamide
Zamzam Water

Desert Radiance Face Cream, £29.97 – www.zamy.co.uk

Ramadan Iftar Delights: The Best Restaurants to Savor Every Bite

This Ramadan, we've curated a selection of restaurants offering diverse cuisines and healthy eating options for your iftar gatherings.

Whether you're in London or Manchester, these spots provide flavourful dishes with a focus on nutritious choices.

In London, enjoy delicious meals at Normah's with its Malaysian-inspired dishes, or head to Kibele Restaurant for a taste of authentic Turkish Mediteranean cuisine. If you're in Manchester, My Lahore offers a variety of South Asian flavours, while Mrs A's Kitchen serves wholesome home-cooked meals.

For a unique twist, try Roti King for Malaysian street food with healthy, hearty options. Perfect for enjoying delicious and mindful eating this Ramadan!

My Lahore, Manchester
– 14-15 Wimslow Road, Manchester M14 5TQ
https://www.mylahore.co.uk

Normahs, Malaysian cuisine - 23-25 Queensway,
Bayswater, London, W2 4QJ
https://www.normahs.co.uk

Afrikana Kitchen - The O2, Peninsula Square,
London SE10 0DX
Stepping into the vibrant world of Afrikana is like celebrating the rich tapestry of African culinary traditions with a contemporary flair. The newly opened restaurant in the 02 arena promises a truly sensational dining adventure for locals and tourists alike. Offering a diverse array of delights, from succulent grilled chicken to flavourful curries, mouth-watering burgers, and an array of delicious vegetarian and vegan options. The menu boasts an impressive selection that caters to every palate, featuring delectable dishes such as slow-cooked Curry Goat, Jerk fried chicken with plantain, Jammin' Jambalaya, and tender French-trimmed lamb chops infused with African-inspired spices and flavours. Go and experience an African iftari this Ramadan, where every meal is a journey through the vibrant flavours of Africa.
https://afrikanakitchen.com

Kibele Restaurant, London
- 174-175 Great Portland Street W1W 5PJ
Upon stepping foot into Kibele, you are transported into a world filled with the rich flavours. The enticing aromas of traditional and authentic Turkish cuisine, give a modern twist focusing on incorporating seasonal ingredients sourced from various regions in Turkey. The establishment boasts two floors, each with its own entrance, with a capacity of up to 80 guests on the main floor and 100 guests on the lower level. This would work really nicely for a midweek evening iftari, especially if you're looking for somewhere just a bit elegant and exquisite. Just a sidenote to check prior to booking as they may have entertainment taking place in the lower ground on the weekends.
https://kibelerestaurant.co.uk/restaurant/

Ibrahimi Buffet Restaurant – 63 Sycamore Avenue, Peterborough, PE1 4JP
https://www.ibrahimi-restaurant.co.uk

Enigma Pan Asian Eatery
– Unit 4, Clements Road, Ilford IG11BP
Step into the inviting Enigma Pan Asian & Grill eatery nestled in the heart of Ilford, Essex. Indulge in the sophisticated yet cosy ambiance, accentuated with stylish Asian accents. The extensive menu at Enigma showcases a variety of delectable Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Indonesian, and Thai delicacies, as well as top-notch steak and grill options that are sure to tantalize your taste buds. The attentive staff is committed to delivering outstanding service, ensuring that each visit is a memorable experience akin to a festive gathering. They will also be offering a specialised iftari menu too. So whether you are commemorating a special event or simply treating yourself to a refined dining experience, Enigma Pan Asian & Grill is the perfect choice.
https://enigmapanasian.co.uk

Oshpaz - 7 Regent Street, St James London SW1 Y4L
https://www.oshpaz.co.uk

Tipu Sultan – 482 Mansfield Road, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 2EL
https://tipusultannottingham.co.uk

Roti King - 16 Arches Lane, Battersea Power Station, London SW11 8AB
https://rotiking.com

Mrs A's Kitchen – 30 Church Street, Eccles, Manchester M30 0DF
https://www.mrsaskitchen.com

Jimmys killer Prawns - 13-25 Liverpool Rd, Manchester, M3 4NW
https://jimmyskillerprawns.com

Pamson Grill – 8-10 Highfield Street, Leicester LE2 1AB
https://pamsongrill.com

Nadiya Hussain:

A Glimpse into Her Inspiring Journey and Latest Cookbook

Nadiya Hussain's rise from a winner of The Great British Bake Off to a celebrated food personality is nothing short of remarkable. With her recent interview for British Muslim Magazine, Nadiya sheds light on her personal and professional journey, offering a unique perspective on her creative process, faith, and family life.

When Nadiya won The Great British Bake Off, she didn't have a clear roadmap for what came next. In her own words, she "kind of fell into it." Her career, driven more by intuition than a set plan, has been shaped by her passions and personal experiences. As one of the first British Muslim women to gain national recognition in the food industry, Nadiya highlights the empowering nature of her journey. The feedback and support she received from fans have shaped her decisions, fuelling her desire to continue creating and innovating.

Nadiya's love for writing cookbooks is a central part of her career. While her previous works were deeply personal, her latest book, Rooza, is a special project that connects her passion for food with her travels and cultural heritage. The book features 30 meals from 30 different countries, including her native Bangladesh, and reflects her love for diverse cuisines. Rooza is a celebration of food from around the world, and it's Nadiya's way of encouraging readers to explore new recipes during Ramadan or any time of year.

With every recipe, she ensures accessibility, adapting ingredients when necessary to make cooking easy for everyone.

For Nadiya, food is more than just about taste—it's about memories. Her travels to countries like Nepal, Mauritius, and Thailand have inspired many of the recipes in Rooza, with each dish carrying personal significance. There's also a deep connection to her Bangladeshi roots, with recipes that remind her of the dishes she grew up with. Whether it's her favourite ties from Nepal or a familiar Bangladeshi meal, the recipes evoke feelings of nostalgia and family.

As a mother of three and a successful entrepreneur, Nadiya's life is a constant juggling act. But she thrives in the busyness, always finding time to create. From making a silk-embroidered skirt for a friend to writing a cookbook, Nadiya finds joy in the act of creating. She credits her success to her supportive husband, who shares the responsibility of running their household. Nadiya is a firm believer in the power of collaboration and the importance of a strong support system, and she admires those who manage it all on their own.

During Ramadan, Nadiya takes a mindful approach to diet and spirituality. While cooking for her family, she focuses on nourishing meals that won't leave her feeling sluggish the next day. She's also intentional about balancing food with faith, ensuring that her family remains spiritually grounded throughout the month. Nadiya and her husband make it a point to pray together in the mosque early each morning before focusing on a light gym session to stay energised.

Nadiya's book, Rooza, is a labour of love. She believes it's a perfect addition to every Muslim household, especially during Ramadan.

Not only does the book offer a variety of recipes to explore, but it also reflects her heart and soul. The book's authenticity and cultural significance make it a meaningful gift for Eid, encouraging creativity in the kitchen while connecting with faith and family traditions.

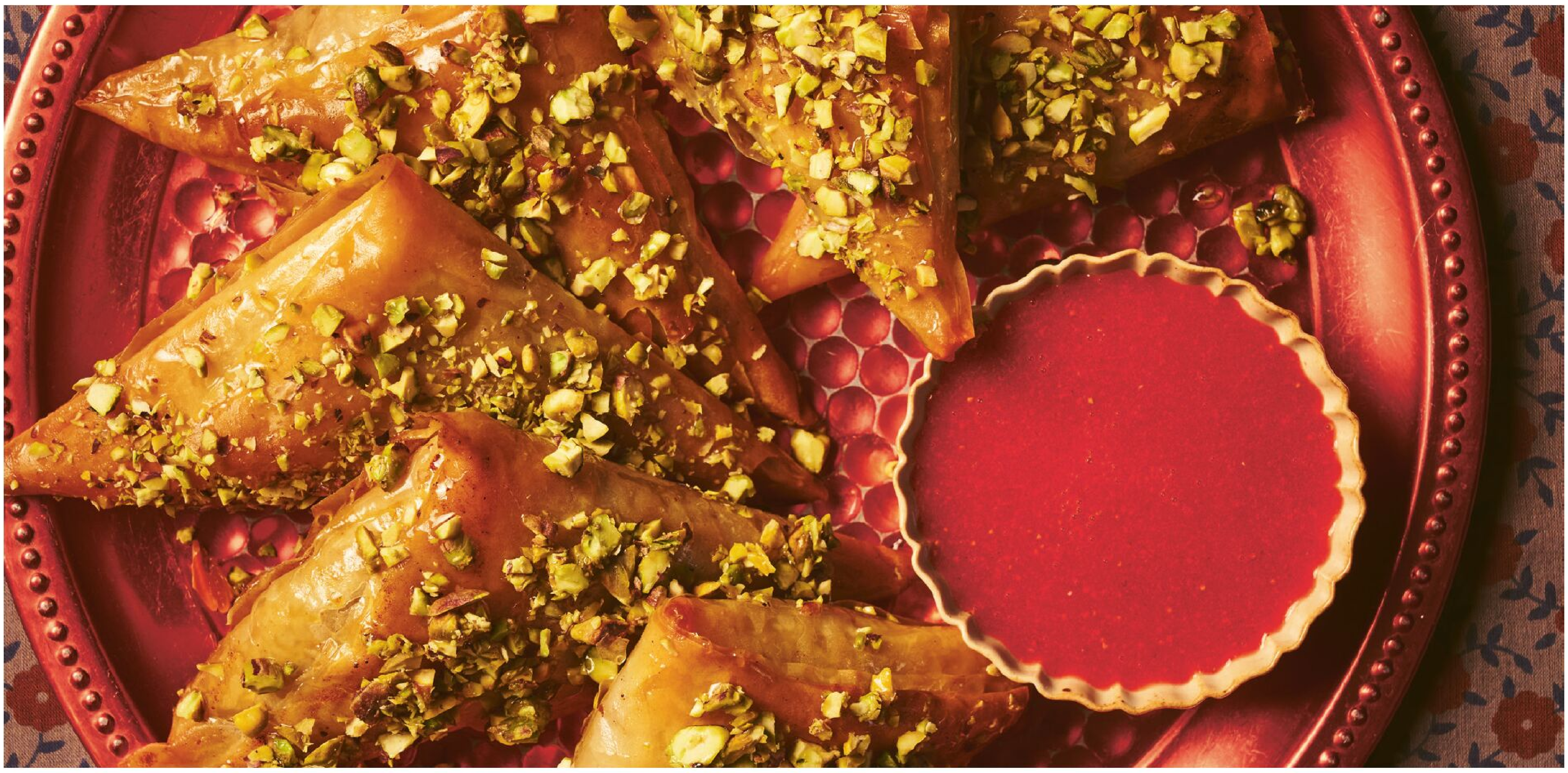
Eid in Nadiya's household is a joyous, family-centered celebration. The day begins with a unique tradition—Nadiya's children follow a trail of coloured Smarties leading them to their gifts.

After presents are opened, the family heads to Leeds to join Nadiya's extended family for Eid prayers and a massive feast. The celebrations stretch over two days, including time with her parents and a day of fun with her nieces and nephews.

Nadiya's journey is one of passion, resilience, and a deep connection to family and faith. With Rooza, she continues to share not only her love for food but also the values and traditions that make her journey truly unique.

To grab your copy from Amazon today or enter our online competition for your chance to WIN a copy.

Words – Natasha Syed image: Chris Terry



Samsas

Samsa is a traditional dish often made during Ramadhan. They are not like the samosas you frequently find, filled with spiced savoury meat. These are stuffed with a mixture of ground down nuts, sweet potato, orange and cinnamon. Doused in sweet syrup, they are then coated again with nuts. I like to serve minewith a simple strawberry coulis.

Follow @nadiyajhussain
for more tasty recipes!

Ingredients:

For the filling

- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 orange, zest only (reserving the juice for later)
- 100g walnuts, finely chopped

For the pastry

- 150g butter
- 270g pack of filo pastry,
- ready-rolled (7 sheets)
- 100g pistachios, finely chopped

For the syrup

- juice of an orange (see above)
- 100ml water
- 150g caster sugar

For the strawberry coulis

- 227g punnet of strawberries
- 100g icing sugar
- squeeze of lemon juice

Instructions:

1. Pierce the sweet potatoes all over with a fork, place directly on to a microwave plate and cook for 10 minutes till very soft. You can also do this in the oven.
2. Take out and leave to cool enough so they can be handled and then scoop out all the flesh and pop into a bowl. Mash to a smooth paste with the cinnamon, orange zest and walnuts. Set aside.
3. For the pastry, pop the butter into a pan and melt till brown. As soon as it starts to bubble and brown flecks appear, you have browned the butter. Take off the heat.
4. Preheat the oven to 190°C and have a baking tray at the ready.
5. Cut the filo sheets down the length and create 14 strips of filo, leaving the sheets you're not working with under a damp tea towel. Butter two sheets together. Take a dollop of the filling and place at the bottom of the end of the strip. Fold a corner over to create a visible triangle, encasing the filling. Now take the filled triangle and fold over again and keep going till you have a fully encased triangle. Make the other six and butter them all over with any leftover butter.
6. Pop on to the tray and bake for 20 minutes.
7. Make the syrup by pouring the orange juice into a pan with the water and caster sugar. Bring to the boil and leave to simmer till the syrup is thick and golden.
8. Take the triangles out of the oven and dip straight into the syrup till completely coated, then coat with pistachios and set aside.
9. For the strawberry coulis, put the fresh strawberries, icing sugar and lemon juice in a food processor and blend. Serve alongside the samsas as a dip or a drizzle.

Kabuli Pulao with Qorma-e-Sabzi Lamb Pulao with Greens

I had this very dish at a tiny restaurant that serves authentic Afghani food. When I go to a restaurant that I have never eaten at before and where the cuisine is new to me, I always ask the waiting staff what they recommend, and this was it. I love rice in all its forms and this recipe perfectly captures the essence of the Kabuli pulao from what I can remember. Lightly scented rice served with spinach and a sweet and savoury carrot topping. Joy in every single mouthful.

Serves 8

Follow @nadiyajhussain
for more tasty recipes!

Ingredients:

For the pulao
- 150g ghee
- 4 cloves
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 large cinnamon stick
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons garlic paste
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 500g diced boneless lamb
- 3 tablespoons garam masala
- 100ml hot water
- 500g basmati rice
- 650ml boiling water

For the qorma-e-sabzi
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 bunch of spring onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 lemon, juice only
- 1kg frozen spinach
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- small handful of fresh coriander
- small handful of fresh dill

For the carrot topping
- 2 carrots, grated
- 50g raisins
- 40g almonds, toasted
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons honey

Instructions:

1. Start by making the pulao. To a large pan add all the ghee and, over a high heat, allow the ghee to melt. Add the cloves, bay leaves and stick of cinnamon and let the whole spices sizzle in the melting ghee.
2. Add the sliced onions and cook till they are really soft and golden.
3. Now add your garlic paste and salt and cook through for a few minutes. Get the lamb cubes in with the garam masala and cook till the meat is brown. Pour in the 100ml hot water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat slightly and cook till there is no more liquid left and there is a golden-brown mixture coating the meat.
4. Wash the basmati rice till the water runs clear. This will take a few washes, but it's important to remove as much starch as possible.
5. Drain the rice and add to the meat. On a high heat, mix the rice with the meat and onions, mixing and scraping the base for about 5 minutes to remove any rice that may be sticking.
6. Pour in the boiling water and, over a high heat, mix and allow the whole thing to come to a boil till almost all the liquid has dried off and you can see every grain of rice. As soon as you get to that point, lower the heat completely and put the lid on. Leave to steam for about 30 minutes.
7. While the pulao cooks, let's make the qorma-e-sabzi. Pour the oil into a medium non-stick pan and bring to a high heat. Add the sliced spring onions with the salt and cook for a few minutes.
8. As soon as the spring onions are soft, add the lemon juice and the frozen spinach. Water should release from the frozen spinach – keep cooking till most of the liquid has evaporated. Add the ground coriander and black pepper and cook till completely dry and there is no excess liquid in the base when you are stirring.
9. Take it off the heat as soon as it is ready and stir in the freshcoriander and dill.
10. Make the quick carrot topping by putting the grated carrots in a bowl with the raisins and toasted almonds. Mix well. Put the vinegar and honey in a bowl and mix. Drizzle all over the carrots and stir through.
11. Take the rice off the heat and serve on a platter or in the pan with the carrot mixture sprinkled over and the qorma–e–sabzi alongside.

Kunefe - Sweet Crispy Cheese

I tried this a long time ago and could not believe that there was mozzarella in a dessert, but we better believe it! Crunchy, shredded pastry with a stringy, oozy cheesy filling, all doused in a sweet syrup. It is mind-blowingly good.

Serves 8

Follow @nadiyajhussain
for more tasty recipes!

Ingredients:

For the kunefe

- 300g kataif pastry
- 200g salted butter, melted and browned
- 250g shredded mozzarella

For the syrup

- 400g caster sugar
- 400ml water
- 4 tablespoons orange blossom water
- 50g pistachios, roasted and Chopped

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Start by putting the kataif pastry in a bowl. Break it up and take it apart, tearing the shredded pastry with your hands. Sprinkle over the melted browned butter and make sure the pastry is coated.
3. Take a small 20cm round shallow cake tin and arrange half the pastry in the base in an even layer. Sprinkle in your shredded cheese right on top.
4. Take the rest of the pastry and place on top of the cheese, covering it completely. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, make the syrup by putting the sugar, water and
6. orange blossom water in a pan and bringing to a boil. As soon as it has boiled, reduce and let the syrup simmer on a low heat for 10 minutes.
7. Take the kunefe out of the oven. Sprinkle over the pistachios and while it's still hot, drizzle the syrup all over. Leave to sit for a few minutes before cutting into eight pieces and serving.

BRING A CHEER TO YOUR SAAG PANEER

WITH THAT RICH DOUBLE CHURNED TASTE

BUTTER THE FOOD

ANCHOR
WESTBURY WILTSHIRE

BUTTER THE MOOD

THIS RAMADAN

Subject to availability.

CHICKEN SPRING ROLLS (SAVOURY)

By: Zainab Dokrat (@SpicyFusionKitchen)

These aren't your typical spring rolls! Bursting with a bold fusion of spices and a delightful blend of Indo-Chinese flavours, this recipe takes your palate on an unforgettable journey. Perfectly versatile, it's ideal as finger food to elevate any table spread or as a delicious treat in lunch boxes year-round.

Ingredients:

- 1 kg Cubed (small, approximately 2cm) Chicken Fillet
- 3 - 4 Tbsp Green Chili Paste or Ground Green Chillies
- 1/2 Cup Lemon Juice
- 1 Tbsp Crushed Garlic
- 1 1/2 tsp Grated Ginger
- 2 - 3 Tbsp Butter (2 - 3 Tbsp Prefered Oil)
- 2 Chopped Fresh Green Chilies
- 1 tsp Crushed Garlic
- 2 Onions Diced Medium
- 1 Large Tin Whole Kernal Corn (240g - drained)
- 1 tsp Chinese 5 Spice Powder 1/2 tsp Black Pepper Powder
- 1/2 tsp Garlic Powder 4 - 5 Tbsp Soy Sauce

Vegetable Stirfry Ingredients

- 1 Cup Grated Carrots (2 Medium - Large Carrots)
- 1 Medium Sized Cabbage Shredded Finely
- 1 Cup Cubed Red Bell Peppers
- 1 Cup Cubed Green Bell Peppers
- 1/4 tsp Crushed Garlic
- 2 Tbsp Butter (or preferred oil)
- Sprinkle of Salt (to taste - remember the soy sauce has salt)
- 1/4 tsp Freshly Cracked Pepper
- 1/4 tsp Red Chili Flakes

Extra Ingredients

- 2 Cups Boiled Spaghetti or Rice Noodles (chopped with scissors into small strands) - Room Temperature

- 1 1/2 Cups Thick Smooth White Sauce - Room Temperature
- 1 Cup Chopped Fresh Spring Onions
- 1 - 2 Cups Chopped Fresh Coriander
- 2 Packets Spring Roll Pastry (Total 60 Sheets)

Spring Roll Glue Ingredients

- 1/4 Cup Flour
- 4 - 5 Tbsp Water

Instructions:

1. Prep your chicken fillets by washing them and cutting them into approximately 2cm cubes.
2. Next, marinate the cubed chicken with the green chilli paste/ground green chillies, lemon juice, ginger, and garlic.
3. In a medium-sized wide pot), on high heat, add in the butter, and once it starts to melt, spread it around before adding in the garlic and chopped green chillies.
4. Let it saute for a minute before adding the marinated cubed chicken. Give it a quick stir, and cook for 2 - 3 minutes.
5. Next, add the diced onions and drained whole-kernel corn and mix well. Do not add any water. Close the lid and cook on medium heat for 15 minutes.
6. While the chicken is cooking, heat a wok on another burner, add the butter, and saute the garlic for 1 minute.
7. Next, add the grated carrots, shredded cabbage, and cubed peppers and quickly toss everything.
8. After 1 - 2 minutes, reduce the heat to medium and season with salt, freshly cracked black pepper, and red chilli flakes.
9. Continue stir-frying the vegetables for another 5 minutes (do not overcook them), then remove them from the heat and let them cool.
10. Once the chicken is cooked, ensure the liquid has dried out. Again, do not overcook it or add water. If it's done, remove it from the heat.
11. Immediately add the Chinese 5 spice powder, soy sauce, garlic powder, black pepper powder, and salt (depending on the taste) to the chicken.
12. Next, mix in your stir-fried vegetables.
13. While the filling is cooling down, add the cut-boiled spaghetti or rice noodles (which should not be too soft).
14. Next, add 1 1/2 cups of the smooth, thick white sauce to the filling and mix well.
15. Finally, you're at the end of preparing the filling; once it's at room temperature (a faster way to cool down your filling is by placing it in the fridge for 1 - 2 hours - for the best results, leave it in the fridge overnight), add in the chopped spring onions and coriander and give it one final mix. Your filling won't be extremely dry; however, the thick white sauce will hold it together, and again, it should not be "watery".
16. Now, it's time to prepare your spring roll sheets. They should be at room temperature. Dampen a clean dish towel (it should not be dripping wet). Gently separate each sheet from the others, placing them on half of the dishtowel. You can layer them on top of each other.
17. Cover the stacked separated sheets with the other half of the damped dish towel.
18. Now, it's time to fill them. The sheets I used were a bit large, so with the square sheet in front of me, I cut a strip approximately 2cm wide from the left side and another 2cm wide across the top, making the square a bit smaller. I only made those two cuts. Depending on your preference, you may or may not need to cut the sheet.
19. Turn the spring roll sheet diagonally (one corner should face you). Place one heaped serving tablespoon of the filling slightly above the corner of the spring roll sheet.
20. Next, hold the corner facing you and bring it over the filling. Using your fingers, secure it against the filling.
21. Then, bring the right-side corner over your filling, followed by the left side. Make sure the sides are nicely tucked, neat, and secure.
22. You should be left with a long spring roll strip and begin rolling it towards the top corner.
23. Before reaching the end, lightly spread the spring roll glue (mix the flour and water into a semi-thick paste) over the leftover strip till the corner and roll the spring roll until it's closed. The spring roll glue will ensure it doesn't open while fried.
24. Place your rolled spring roll onto a lined baking tray, and you can place another lightly damped dish towel over your finished spring rolls, so they don't dry out as you fill the rest.
25. Continue the process till all your spring rolls are filled.
26. To freeze the spring rolls, place them in an airtight container. When you're ready to cook, there's no need to thaw them—though it's recommended for best results. You can either shallow fry or air fry them. For shallow frying, heat the oil over medium-high heat for 1-2 minutes until it's hot, then carefully add the spring rolls, ensuring not to overcrowd the pan. Turn them occasionally to ensure even browning. Since the filling is already cooked, once the spring rolls are golden and crisp, remove them from the oil, let them drain on a paper towel, and enjoy with a sweet and spicy dipping sauce (recipe to follow). If using an air fryer, simply arrange the frozen spring rolls in a single layer, spray lightly with oil, and cook at 180°C (350°F) for 8-10 minutes, flipping halfway through.

Sicilian-Inspired Prawn Pasta

By: Zainab Dokrat
(@SpicyFusionKitchen)

Don't mind me, I'm just dreaming of Italy. This Sicilian-inspired recipe is pasta-bly my favourite at the moment. It's so easy and comes together quickly, which is perfect for those days when you don't want to fuss around the kitchen too much.

Ingredients:

- 1 - 2 Tbsp Oil
- 1 Tbsp Freshly Minced Garlic 1 - 2 Tbsp Red Chili Paste Pinch of Saffron
- 1 Cup Tomato Puree
- 1 Grated Tomato
- 2 tsp Tomato Paste
- 1 Tbsp Sweet Dry Basil
- 1/2 tsp Paprika
- Pinch of Salt
- 250g Spaghetti/Linguine
- Garnish - Freshly Chopped Basil or Dry Basil Serve With - Croutons

Instructions:

1. The sauce and prawns will cook quickly, especially if everything is prepped before you start cooking. I suggest boiling your spaghetti and setting it aside.
2. Heat the oil in a deep pan on medium heat for a few seconds before adding 1/2 Tbsp of the freshly minced garlic.
3. Braise for about a minute. Once the garlic softens and caramelises, add the red chilli paste and keep stirring as it cooks for another minute.
4. Next, stir a few saffron strands into the chilli garlic paste.
5. Add the tomato puree and grated tomato quickly, stirring them in. Then, simmer at medium temperature for 1 - 2 minutes.
6. Once it bubbles, add the tomato paste, followed by the other 1/2 Tbsp of the freshly crushed garlic.
7. Let the sauce simmer for 1 - 2 minutes before mixing the prawns. Then, add 1/4 cup of water and basil.
8. Let the prawns cook for 5 - 10 minutes at a medium temperature (be careful not to overcook the prawns); your sauce will thicken up.
9. When the prawns are cooked, add the boiled spaghetti, mix it with the sauce and prawns, and cook for another couple of seconds so all the flavours fuse.
10. Finally, garnish with freshly chopped basil (or dry basil) and serve with croutons.

Sweet and Spicy Dipping Sauce

By: Zainab Dokrat (@SpicyFusionKitchen)

My fusion spring roll recipe is incomplete without my go-to complementary dipping sauce. Unlike the traditional chutneys commonly found on Ramadan tables or served with savoury dishes, this sauce adds a delightful umami-rich layer that perfectly enhances the Indo-Chinese flavours of the spring rolls. You can also use it in stir-fries or as a sushi dipping sauce.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp Oil
- 1 tsp Crushed Garlic or Garlic Powder 1/2 tsp Grated Ginger or Ginger Powder 1/2 Cup Soy Sauce
- 1 Tbsp Honey
- 1 tsp Siracha Sauce
- 1/2 tsp Chili Flakes
- 1 tsp Vinegar
- 2 - 3 Chopped Spring Onions
- 1 Tbsp Sesame Seeds

Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan at medium temperature before adding the crushed garlic and ginger.
2. Sauté for 1 - 2 minutes before adding in the soy sauce, honey, sriracha sauce, chilli flakes and vinegar.
3. Allow it to simmer for 2 - 3 minutes before removing it from the heat and letting the sauce cool.
4. Mix in your chopped spring onions and sesame seeds before pouring the sauce into a serving bowl.
5. Serve at room temperature with your fried spring rolls. It can also be used in stir-fries or as a sushi dipping sauce.

Ramadan Reads:

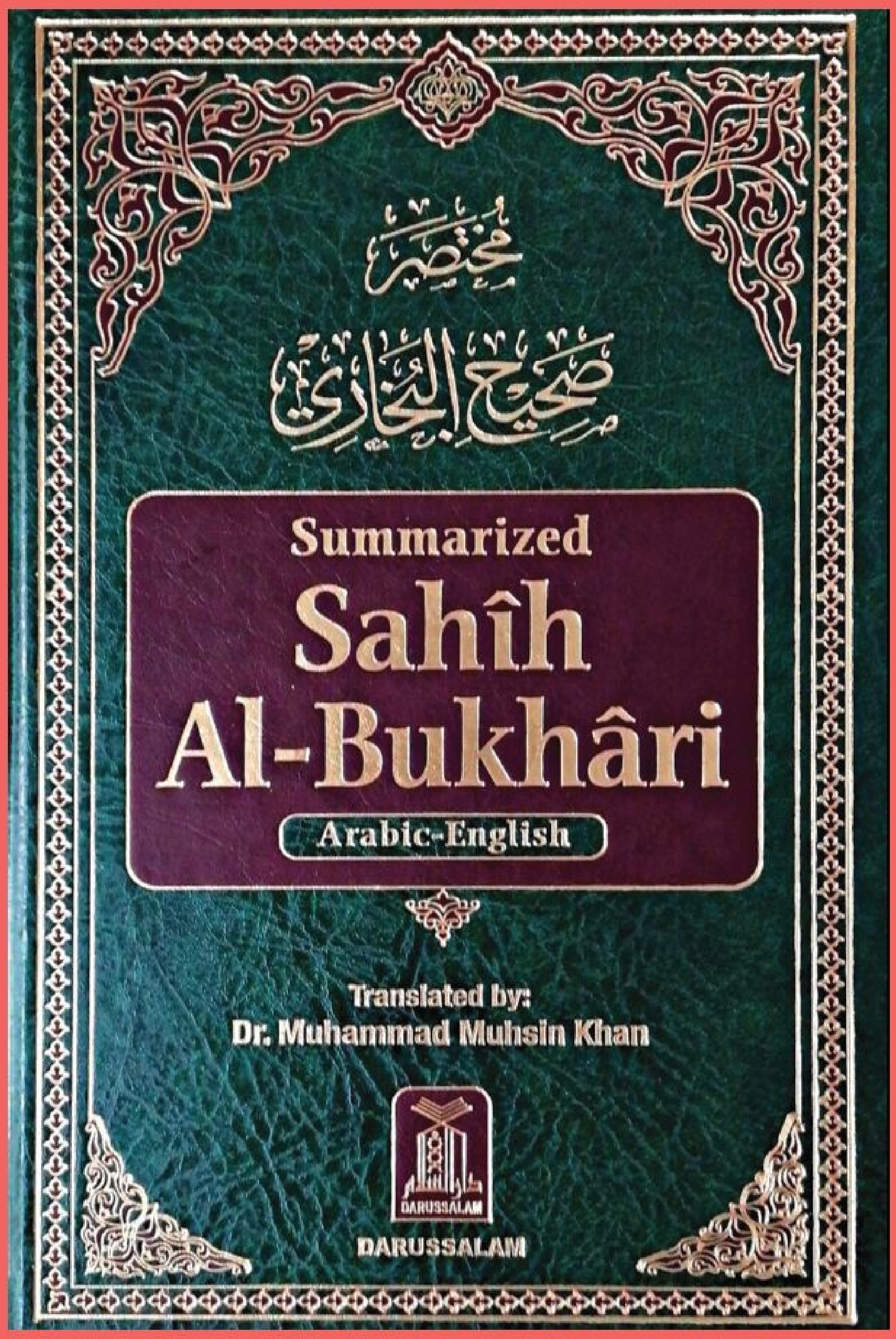
Nourish Your Soul Through Words

Ramadan is a time for reflection, growth, and deepening our connection with Allah swt. At the heart of this sacred month is the Qur'an, a divine guide that should be our primary focus—whether through recitation, reflection, or study. Alongside it, reading books that inspire, educate, and uplift can enhance our spiritual journey.

That's why we've carefully curated a selection of must-read books for Ramadan—ranging from faith and self-development to inspiring stories. Whether you seek motivation, wisdom, or serenity, our recommendations will enrich your Ramadan experience. Let's make this month one of learning, reflection, and spiritual renewal.

1. **The Qur'an, £17.99 – Ebay**
2. **The Power of Du'a, £14.99 – Kube Publishing**
3. **Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life, £12.99 - Amazon**
4. **Reclaim Your Heart, £14.67 – Amazon**
5. **In The Early Hours, £4.99 – Amazon**
6. **Ramadan Mubarak, £7.59 - TharikHussain.co.uk**

For more recommended reads, subscribe to our FREE newsletter at www.britishmuslim-magazine.com!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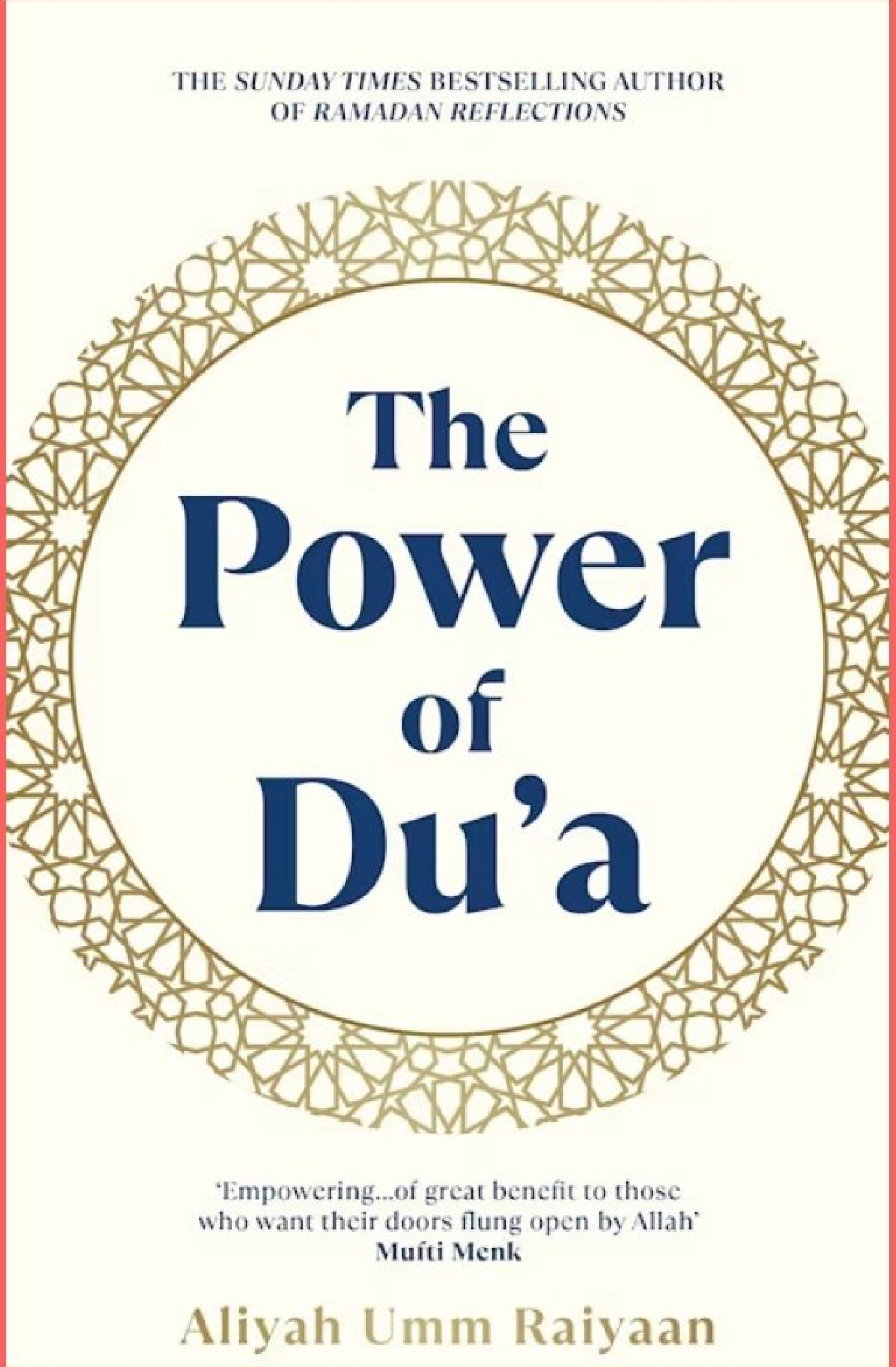
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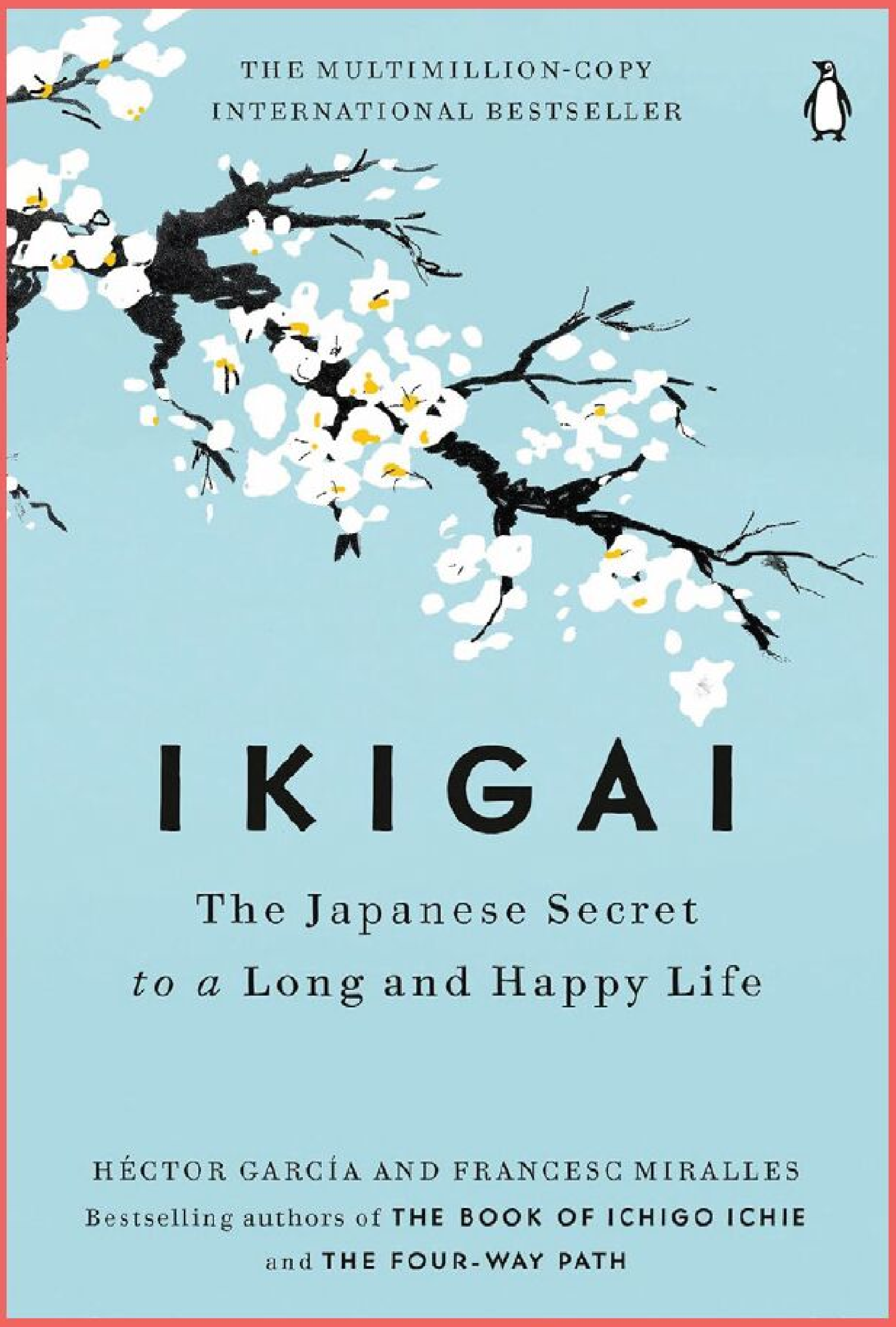
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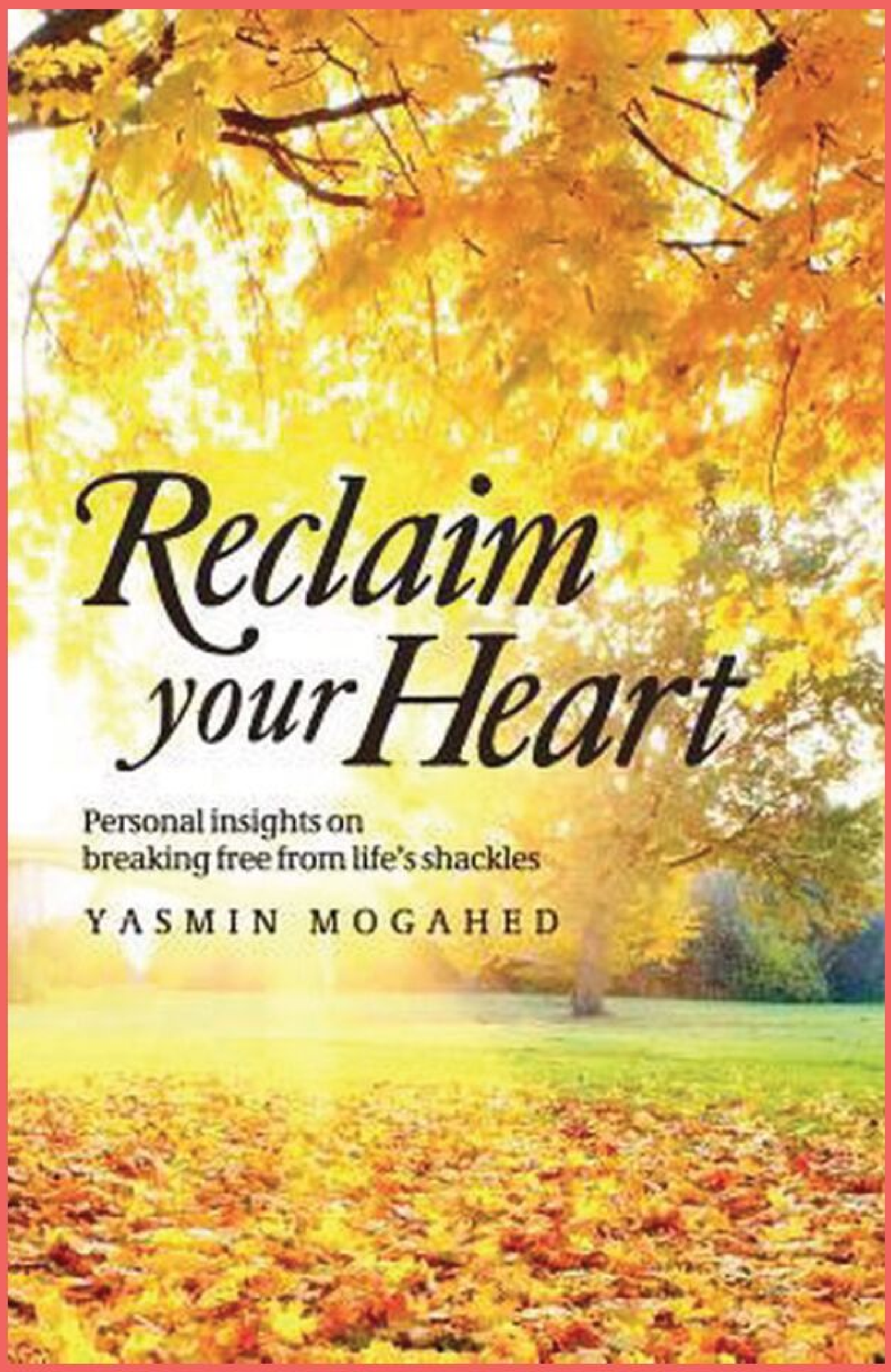
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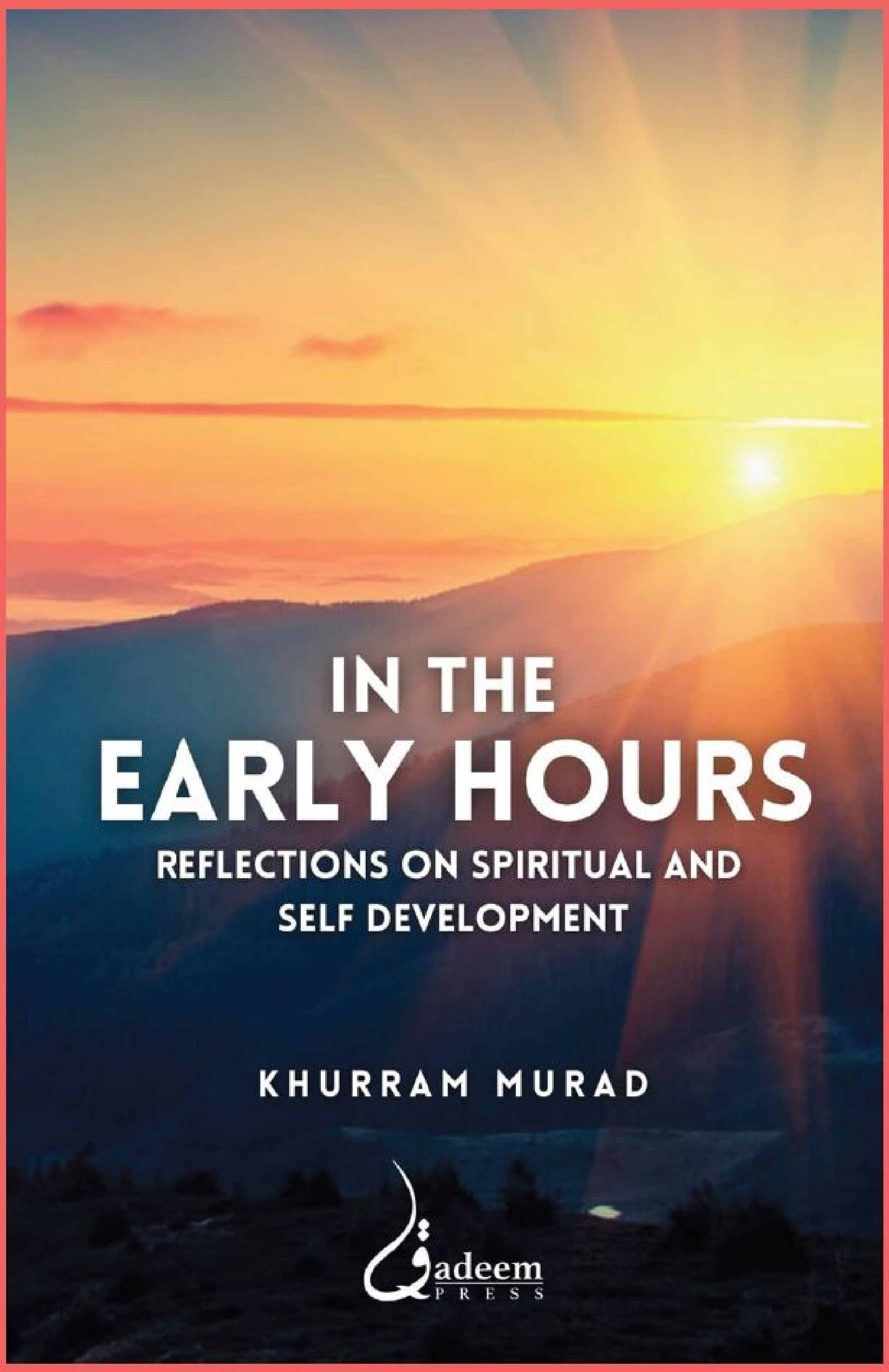
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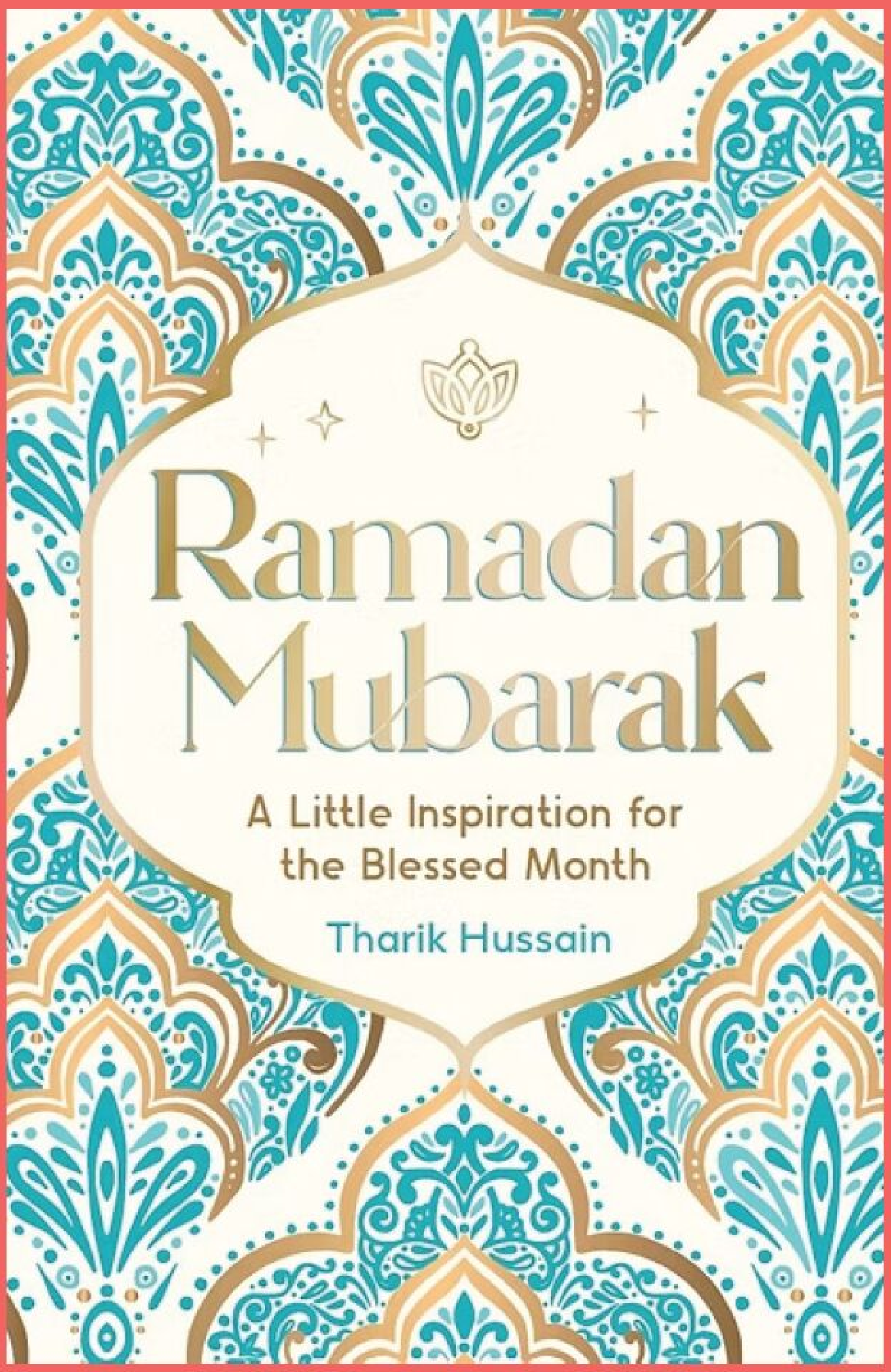
Ramadan
Mubarak
A Little Inspiration for
the Blessed Month
Tharik Hussain

Ten Nights
Theatrical Play Review

By Tahira Khan

"From Attitude to Gratitude, an introspective way towards the transition"

Under the direction of Sâmir Bhamra, the moving and funny one-man performance featured Adeel Ali in the lead role of Yasser. 10 Nights dives into the themes of belief, belonging, and personal growth as Yasser embarks on a period of retreat during the last ten nights of Ramadan. What was supposed to be a peaceful time of introspection in a mosque quickly turns into a series of unexpected challenges for Yasser, prompting him to reflect on his actions towards himself and others. With his phone confiscated and his dream of winning a TikTok dance challenge unfulfilled, Yasser reluctantly participates in the retreat to honour his deceased friend and please his father.

Throughout his time in what was meant to be 'complete solitude', Yasser confronts and navigates the complexities of sharing a communal space in a mosque, grappling with the constant scrutiny and advice from his fellow worshippers. And of course, there's his constant craving for chicken and chunky chips. As he undergoes this transformation, he is forced to confront hidden truths about himself, ultimately emerging with a fresh perspective and gratitude for life. Even though he was labelled negatively by people around him, he came out with a memorised Qur'an recitation so effortlessly which amazed me personally. It makes one reconnect with the fact that no one should judge another human and Allah is the only judge.

Through a blend of humour and emotional depth, the play offers a poignant depiction of a young man wrestling with his faith, inner struggles, and aspirations. Adeel Ali expressed his excitement about being part of 10 Nights, describing it as a remarkable production that allows him to embody a range of characters that reflect societal norms, explore religious beliefs, and celebrate the sense of community. At its heart, 10 Nights is a coming-of-age narrative that delves into fractured relationships within a community striving for dignity, hope, and solidarity. It's a compelling tale that resonates with audiences as they witness Yasser's journey unfold through moments of laughter, warmth, and self-discovery.

Director Sâmir Bhamra added: "10 Nights is about more than just theatre - it's the kind of British Asian story we need right now - human, relatable, and unapologetically real, that truly reflects our diverse society. Shahid's play dismantles stereotypes about Muslim men with warmth, grace, and humour and I am delighted that our venue partners are working with us to welcome communities who have been constantly ignored."

10 Nights opens at Riverside Studios Hammersmith (8 - 26 January) before touring to Derby Theatre (27 - 28 January), The Lowry Manchester (30 January - 1 February), Lawrence Batley Theatre (4 - 5 February) and Birmingham Hippodrome (6 - 8 February).

Tickets are now available at https://www.phizzical.com/show/10-nights/.

Make eye drops a part of your **Ramadan routine:**

“Wake, drops, eat, pray, done!”

“**Using eye drops does not break your fast,** according to the majority of Islamic scholars.”

Imam

“**Blocking my tear duct** means the drops stay in my eye and don’t reach the back of my throat.”

Patient

“**Use eye drops every day** or your sight may be damaged.”

Ophthalmologist

“My family member living with glaucoma uses their drops **between Iftar and Suhoor**.”

Family

It’s important to continue taking glaucoma eye drops throughout the month of Ramadan. Stopping for even a short period could cause **permanent damage to your vision.**

For more information, advice and handy tips, visit:
glaucoma.uk/ramadan

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